

# **The Consequences and Impacts of Maverick Politicians on Contemporary Australian Politics**

by

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## Declarations

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses the consequences and impacts of maverick politicians on contemporary Australian politics, especially Australian political parties. The thesis uses a case study methodology to argue that maverick politicians are one manifestation of an anti-political mood currently found in the electorate; that they provide parties with a testing ground to develop leaders, although maverickism and leadership are a difficult mix of attributes to sustain; that they can have significant influence on a party's policy formulation; and that they form strong organisational ties within the party, centred on localism. The research is important because there has been little enquiry into political mavericks in the literature; although the term "maverick" is widely used in the media and scholarly work there is no consensus on what political maverick means, who political mavericks are or the consequences of their actions. This thesis sheds some light on those questions and helps explain the associated concepts of "celebrity politician" and "conviction politician" - concepts which are similarly poorly researched but widely used.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the research

Australians are used to their politicians being a largely homogeneous lot. Today's parties can trace their roots back to Federation (Farrell and McAllister 2005), and since the Second World War the federal government has comprised of either the Australian Labor Party (ALP), on the centre-left, or the Liberal Party (often in formal coalition with the National Party), on the centre-right. Minor parties and independents have been almost non-existent – since 1910 almost all governments in Australia, federal and state, have been formed by one of the major parties (Jaensch and Mathieson 1998, p. 1). By 1975, after the collapse of the Democratic Labor Party (an off-shoot of the ALP) and before the rise of the Democrats, 95.9 per cent of Australians gave their primary vote in the House of Representatives to either a Labor or the Coalition candidate. That figure was still well above 90 percent as late as the 1987 election.

The hold by the major parties had started to change by the 1998 election, with One Nation, the Democrats and the Greens all gaining support. Consequently, the combined major party vote fell to 79.6 percent - the second lowest in history, and the first time it had been below 80 percent since 1934. However, as One Nation dwindled, major party support recovered somewhat, reaching 85.5 percent in 2007, but dropping again in 2010. At that election Labor and the Coalition together totalled just 82 percent.

Despite the iron grip of the major parties beginning to loosen (explained later in this thesis in terms of “anti-politics”), Australia's instant runoff electoral system and compulsory voting makes the election of minor party candidates and independents very difficult. For that reason, campaigns continue to be centred on the merits of the two parties, or more increasingly the merits of their leaders, rather than individuals. To illustrate, there have been nine federal elections since 1987, and from a 150-member lower house the highest number of non-major party candidates elected was five in 1996 and 2010, and the fewest zero in 1987.



To imagine politics without parties is like trying to imagine Australian football without teams. Politics just is the game played out by rival parties, and anyone who tries to play politics in some way entirely independent of parties consigns herself to irrelevance. (Brennan 1996, p. 10)

The 2010 election turned out to be not quite as Brennan described, with four independents and one Green successful, more than normal but still only three percent of the available seats. But these members held the balance of power which meant they wielded far more influence than would otherwise be the case. Independent and minor party success in the House of Representatives remains the exception: the rule in Australian politics is that the party rules - if you want a political career, join a major party and toe the line. In over a century candidates have rarely strayed from party policy: to run a “maverick” or independent campaign would likely lead to disendorsement by the party and therefore almost certain failure at the ballot.

Australia, among western democracies, in this regard is quite unique. The American way, by comparison, allows more for maverick behaviour within the party: it is possible to hold a voting record and ideological position at odds with the party’s, without losing a political career (Ansolabehere et al. 2001; Canes-Wrone et al. 2002). And in the UK, a large backbench and tradition of the “three-line” whip allows for much more voting flexibility.

However, in Australian politics it is a cliché – an “iron law” according to Atkins (2007) – that “disunity is death”. The wisdom is that, perhaps because voting in Australia is compulsory, political parties concentrate on the mediocre, the bland and the consistent in policy and personality – embodied by strict party discipline – because that is what the swing voter, largely disengaged and disinterested in politics, wants.

## **1.2 Research problem and questions**

Yet despite strict party discipline mavericks *are* present in Australian political parties. Against the odds and the orthodoxy they carve out political careers, influence policy and grapple for the limelight. Thus, the question for this thesis is:

*What consequences and impacts do maverick politicians have on contemporary Australian politics, particularly Australian political parties?*

This thesis tries to understand what sets mavericks apart from their peers, how mavericks are different from each other, and what contributions they make to the Australian polity. It ultimately makes several arguments. First, that mavericks successfully harness “star power” in that they have a higher public profile than non-mavericks, voters generally know them better, mavericks are more in tune with issues important to voters, and are trusted more. Second, mavericks, in company with all politicians, desire, or at least start off with the desire, for electoral security, the perks of office and policy influence; however, party discipline, characterised by institutionalised controls such as internal party factionalism, the doctrine of Cabinet solidarity and the leader’s power to punish or promote, means that career advancement and maverick behaviour are in permanent tension – and often mutually exclusive.

Third, notwithstanding the above, the thesis shows that mavericks can make a positive contribution to policy formulation and their maverick views are often the catalyst for new ideas being adopted by the party. Essentially the thesis concludes that mavericks are rare in Australian party politics, but not extinct. In order to overcome the disincentives to maverick behaviour that are inherent in Australia’s political system, mavericks are “better” at campaign politics than their non-maverick colleagues.

To guide the research, the thesis develops questions to provide direction for the exploration within the cases and, ultimately, to provide the link between the research problem, the data and the study’s findings. In this way they serve a similar purpose to hypotheses in scientific studies (Tellis 1997). Chapter 2 establishes these research questions in detail. Below they are listed in summary:

*Are Mavericks electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents?*

*Is one explanation for maverick success that the maverick is a more accomplished communicator than the party loyalist - better at “conviction politics” and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of “celebrityhood”?*

*Are mavericks more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with policy influence and career within the party, or do mavericks have a significant impact on party decision-making and policy formulation?*

### **1.3 Justification for the research**

Identifying the factors that explain the impacts of maverick politicians in Australia is a significant question on a number of fronts. First, there has been little enquiry into political maverickism in either the scholarly or popular literature. Although the term “political maverick” is widely used, there is little consensus on what it means. Perhaps "political maverick" is so descriptively powerful in itself that writers have never felt the need to investigate meaning further – one of those fundamental terms taken so much for granted that it has escaped scrutiny?

Chapter 2 considers the prevalence of political maverickism in Australia, and how mavericks are perceived by the media and by scholarly writers. It finds that the expression “political maverick” is much more prevalent in the popular and general literature than in scholarly work. A review of the academic writings that do exist shows that there is no real scholarly consensus on what the term means, or who a political maverick is. That is an indication that there has been a relative neglect by previous writers, and that this research is worthwhile.

Second, it is hoped that the outcomes here will assist in understanding how this one category of political individuals "work". Campaign and electoral politics are a dynamic, shifting phenomenon that, nonetheless, tends to be generalised in the writings. Politicians and parties are often considered as a homogenous identity who are seen to act as one, when in fact their personalities and the way they campaign and conduct themselves varies across the full range of human possibilities.

Knowing something about mavericks makes an important contribution to understanding how campaigns are won or lost, and why some politicians prevail over others. Individual politicians and potential politicians may learn how to "harness" maverick behaviour to their advantage (or avoid the pit-falls); and political parties may gain an insight into the consequences of maverick behaviour, and ultimately benefit from their mavericks.

A third important justification for the study is that there is useful potential application for the findings that may lead to further research questions and comparisons to overseas jurisdictions, and those outside the academic community might also gain from the research.

Intuitively, logic implies that someone must be prepared to chance their arm, to go against the party mantra, in order to bring fresh ideas and solutions forward. This is one clear potential benefit of the maverick to the party; but how exactly the polity accommodates mavericks, and gains from them, is an important explanation of the maverick paradox.

The would-be maverick has a lot to contend with: a self-centred, capricious and cynical electorate; a campaign effort centred on the leader (a cult of leadership); and extremely disciplined party machines intolerant of dissent. These characteristics count against maverick political behaviour, yet mavericks have been and remain an important contributor to politics in Australia. Therefore, there is a gap in the prevailing knowledge which this research hopes to go some way to fill.

## **1.4 Thesis structure and research methodology**

**Case study approach.** A case study methodology is used for this research. Chapter 3 considers and justifies the research methodology in detail. In brief, the case study is considered the most appropriate research technique, principally because it is most suited to studies where the researcher has practically no control over events. The purpose of this thesis is to describe mavericks given the political environment of contemporary Australia. The research is focussed on contemporary politicians – it is not an historical study or a record of maverick behaviour over time – and it is not possible, or desirable, to manipulate behaviour as one might in an experiment. This is a “tell it as it is” study that attempts to examine maverick political behaviour in its context. In these circumstances the case study is appropriate:

... the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations – beyond what might be available in the conventional historical study. (Yin 2002, p. 8)

Likewise, case study is preferred over experiment or quasi-experiment, which would only be appropriate in circumstances where the researcher could manipulate and control the variables being observed. As mentioned, this is not possible or desirable in the context of the research question. The purpose is to explain the causal links in real-life circumstances that are too complex – too chaotic – to be controlled within an experimental strategy.

**Thesis structure.** Chapter 1, this chapter, has identified the research problems, and sets (see section 1.5 following) the geographical and situational limits, within which the findings and observations will apply. Chapter 2 identifies the research questions that will guide the data collection within the case studies. Chapter 3 identifies the mavericks as the units of analysis for the subsequent case study research. The three cases are:

1. Harry Quick, Bob Katter and Petro Georgiou
2. Barnaby Joyce and Ross Lightfoot
3. Mark Latham

Chapter 3, as outlined above, also describes the methodology for the research. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 comprise the case studies, while Chapter 7 contains the cross-case findings, conclusions, and implications for further research and theory development.

## **1.5 Limitations and key assumptions**

The purpose of this section is to “build a fence” around the research findings (Perry 2002, p. 6). These are the explicit boundaries expressed in the research problem presented in section 1.2 above, and implicit environmental factors.

**Australian mavericks.** From the very start, it is essential to point out that this is an investigation into Australian mavericks. An important reason is that to be a maverick is so much harder in Australia than other English speaking democracies, which makes the paradox of their existence so much more evident and interesting. To research the differences in political maverick behaviour between countries is be a valid exercise, but that is more usefully the next step that may be suggested from the outcomes here. By conducting an Australian analysis in some detail first the findings can set the benchmarks; once points of reference are established, a comparison between countries becomes more relevant.

A further reason for limiting analysis to Australia is that the differences between the political systems and cultures of countries would make an all-embracing study extremely complex. Different political systems promote (and allow) mavericks to express themselves in different ways. For example, crossing the floor to vote against

one's own party is seen in Australian parliaments as political treachery and usually incurs a penalty from the party such as demotion or even expulsion.

Party discipline is almost absolute in Australian parliaments. With the very rare exception, members of parliament vote along party lines. While party discipline has never been strong in the United States, Australian party discipline is stronger than in Westminster. As a consequence, some have suggested that in Australia responsible party government has replaced the Westminster notion of responsible government. In framing policy, the Prime Minister and Ministers are more concerned with the views of their party than the House of Representatives. (Palmer 2008)

So, in Australia, crossing the floor is an act of a maverick. Elsewhere, it would not carry the same importance. Alone among the major English-speaking democracies, Australian party discipline appears monolithic: the party either marches together, or there is a conscience vote – with nothing in between. In the United Kingdom and the United States, by comparison, not necessarily so; voting against one's party is not a “hangable” offence and occurs much more frequently.

In the UK there is the “three-line” whip system: a one-line whip is a general indication from the prime minister about the line they will take; a double line whip is an instruction to attend and vote in a particular way, but with scope for exemption on conscience; while a three line whip is an instruction on how to vote, and sanctions up to expulsion for those who disobey. But even with a three-line whip issue, voting with the party is not guaranteed. For example, in 2003, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on two pieces of legislation treated as three-line issues, respectively, 73 and 139 MPs of his own Labour Party voted against the bills (Wheatcroft 2004). This would be seen as a revolt in Australia.

In the USA, similarly, both Republican and Democrat members of Congress often vote against party positions. Individual congress members are “rated” by the way they vote on issues, rather than by party allegiance. It must be noted, however, that “the party” does not exist in America in the sense it does in Australia. By way of illustrating the difference, if in the USA a new tax was proposed for, say, an alcoholic drink, the proponent would build a Coalition between pro-regulation Democrats, ultra-conservative Republicans and members of either party from the brewing and distilling

states (Oregon, Kentucky, for example) who would want to see their products become favourably priced by comparison. In Australia, each party would have a party line that all members would be expected to adhere to.

In other words, a maverick in one country may not be a maverick in another, so it is appropriate to contain study here to Australian mavericks, with a view to making recommendations for further study across national borders.

The boundaries for this thesis are further narrowed by only considering mavericks within the Australian federal political jurisdiction. This is done for similar reasons to those above: to increase the robustness of the conclusions by keeping to a minimum the number of variables within the cases. Australia is a federation of states, territories and a central (federal) government, a total of nine parliaments, and although there are a number of common features among them all, notably British-style cabinet and responsible government, there are enough differences that to include all would result in the analysis being not only unwieldy, but also make the interpretation of results difficult. Although all Westminster systems, the term, according Rhodes et al (2009, p. 222) has lost its “analytical rigour”.

Historically, the Australian system of government is a hybrid. When the Australian founding fathers wrote the Australian Constitution in the 1890s they combined elements of the British parliamentary model and the federal model of government from the United States of America into something uniquely Australian. In 1980, Elaine Thompson used the phrase “the Westminster mutation” to remind us that while the British heritage (Westminster) is dominant, the influences of the American model (Washington) on our system of government are substantial and cannot be ignored. (Palmer 2008)

One major differential is the large variation in the sizes of Australian parliaments. The smallest state executive chamber is the Australian Capital Territory with 19 members, the largest New South Wales with 93, while the federal House of Representatives has 150. It is reasonable to expect that the size of the parliament is a significant influence on maverick behaviour. For example, promotion and ministerial opportunities will differ, and the relationships (or “dynamics”) between the various arms of the Westminster parliament, such as the backbench *vis à vis* the cabinet or the opposition *vis à vis* the government will vary. As an illustration, Crawford (2006, p. 37; 2008, p.

38) argues that what he considers to be the small size of the Tasmanian parliament is a significant detrimental effect on the “workings of democracy”, arguing that the “checks and balances” in parliament would be different if the parliament was larger.

A second significant disparity among the parliamentary systems in Australia is the variation amongst electoral systems. With the exception of the Northern Territory, the ACT and Queensland, each state has a bicameral parliament with different electoral systems for each house; as a result there are fifteen houses of parliament in Australia, each with its own system for electing members. These varying parliament sizes and varying electoral systems provide different opportunities for mavericks and maverick behaviour. It is interesting and relevant to consider these differences, but it is contended this would be too difficult to manage and isolate effectively over 15 houses of parliament.

Notwithstanding, by focussing on the federal parliament, consideration of different electoral systems is not completely abandoned. Both federal houses (the House of Representatives and the Senate) use quite different systems (single member preferential and multi-member proportional, respectively) and consideration of and comparison between the two will be integral to the research.

In summary, the study of mavericks in multiple countries or jurisdictions would broaden the classification to such an extent that analysis may become convoluted and lack applicability. Restricting the research to the Australian federal political system enhances and protects the findings, and increases the robustness of the data and conclusions specific to Australia. It may be appropriate, once the research is complete, to test the implications of the findings against the Australian states, or key overseas jurisdictions. This may lead to some useful questions for further research.

**Major party mavericks.** A second important boundary is that the focus is on a particular sub-set of mavericks – party political mavericks. This limitation is set because the term “maverick”, on its own, is too broad in meaning – it is important to be clear about exactly what is meant by the term here. To illustrate, people both in and out of politics are routinely described in the media as “political” mavericks; however, to brand someone so is frequently not meant to imply the person is a maverick in the sense



of being at odds with a group, but often merely to identify someone with perhaps a controversial thought or action.

Because a key feature of Australian politics is the dominance of political parties, it is appropriate to consider mavericks in the dominant political paradigm. Chapter 3 more fully outlines the justification for studying mavericks within the established political parties. Major party mavericks are burdened by party discipline, yet they still exist: to shed some light on how they cope with the party “on their back” is an important element of this research.

**Contemporary mavericks.** The final key limitation is that the research focus is on contemporary political mavericks. The term “contemporary”, for purposes here, means those who stood for since or were members of parliament between 2003 and 2008. The period allows a sufficient and accessible length of time for research and observation. The dates are arbitrary to the extent that no attempt is made to justify what “contemporary” means – one person’s contemporary could easily be another’s old hat – nonetheless, a timeline which starts in 2003 is “contemporary” enough not to be historical but rather describes “current” circumstances.

It is accepted that an historical study of maverick politicians would be interesting and valid; however to include historical comparisons here would extend the thesis too much and make it unwieldy. The key task of this thesis is to draw conclusions about mavericks in Australian politics. Once that is done it may be useful in a further study to compare and contrast those outcomes with mavericks from previous eras.

**Summary of limitations.** This is an enquiry into political mavericks, but does not intend to describe all political mavericks in all circumstances. It is concerned with a specific sub-set of mavericks, those who are:

1. federal Australian politicians, and who
2. belong to or have belonged to a major party, and who
3. entered or have been a member of parliament in contemporary years.

## 1.6 Conclusion

It is contradictory, to an extent, that maverick politicians exist at all: there is little incentive for the voter to vote for a maverick, little incentive for a candidate to become a maverick, and little incentive for a party to reward a maverick. The fact that they *do* exist is a paradox – the maverick paradox. Exploring this contradiction is a valid and useful exercise.

The nineteenth century English novelist, Anthony Trollope, saw even in his day that politicians could be “shaped and fashioned.” Trollope had a lot to say that could just as easily describe twenty-first century politicians:

Four and twenty gentlemen will amalgamate themselves into one whole, and work for one purpose, having each of them set aside his own idiosyncrasy, and to endure the close personal contact of men who must often be personally disagreeable, having been thoroughly taught that in no other way can they serve either their own country or their own ambition. These are the men who are publicly useful, and whom the necessities of the age supply. I have never ceased to wonder that stones of such strong calibre should be so quickly worn down to the shape and smoothness of rounded pebbles. (Trollope 1883)

Not all contemporary Australian politicians fit Trollope’s jaundiced description... most, but not all. Under the “rounded pebbles” are a few mavericks that defy the party and are not “amalgamated into a whole”. How do these mavericks defy the Australian political orthodoxy, the traditions of the media and the cultural and societal habits of the population? An explanation for the existence of maverick politicians in Australia is an interesting problem worth pursuing in the field of political science in general, and the study of electoral and campaign politics in particular.

This chapter laid the foundations for the thesis. It introduced the research question and its testable propositions, then the research was justified, the methodology was briefly described and justified, the thesis structure was outlined, and the limitations were given. On these foundations, the thesis can proceed in the chapters to follow with a detailed description of the research.

## 2 The research questions

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the research problem: What consequences and impacts do maverick politicians have on contemporary Australian politics, particularly Australian political parties? As Yin (2002, p. 21) points out, the research problem captures the purpose of the study, however it does not point to what to study – that is the task of the study’s research questions.

This study employs a semi-inductive approach in that the research agenda and questions are informed by a combination of: (1) the existing research on mavericks, and (2) a broader view of the theoretical literature on Australian electoral and party politics. To these ends, the conceptual map below shows how the research questions result from a “narrowing down” of the body of knowledge. It should be noted that the research questions are not mutually exclusive – some may even appear to be contradictory; because they relate to complex human behaviour they will inevitably overlap and intertwine.

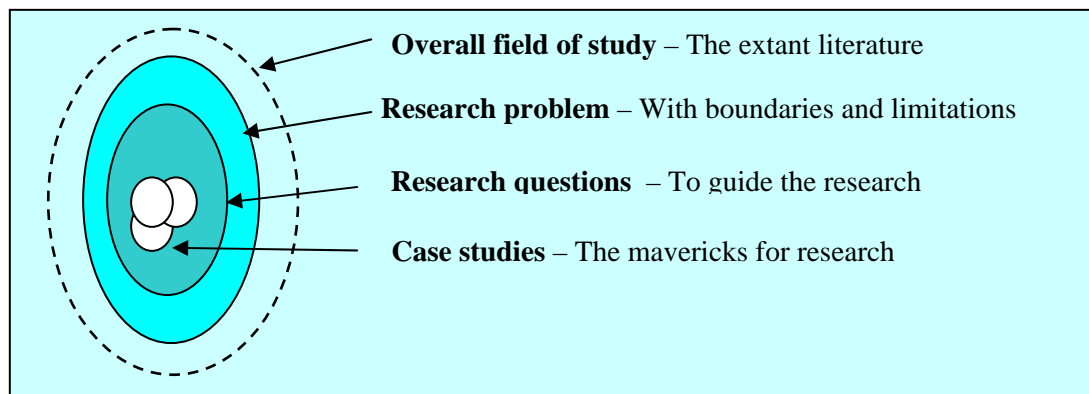


Figure 2.1 “Narrowing down” from the research problem to the cases

This chapter begins with a discussion of the term “political maverick”, where it appears in the literature, and attempts a definition. The research questions are then developed from a synthesis of the main ideas, premises and presumptions that underpin and define the modern Australian political landscape, grouped here for analytical purposes around

three broad themes. It is recognised that these are, to an extent, arbitrary divisions as a discussion of politics in Australia could be categorised thematically in a variety of ways; however, the three chosen allow the maverick to be placed in a comprehensive and relevant political context:

1. Are mavericks electorally successful?
2. How is maverick success explained?
3. What consequences do mavericks have on political parties?

Chapter 2, therefore, identifies the specific research questions that will set the agenda to provide insights into the consequences and sustainability of maverick behaviour; the aim is to explain the political “success” of mavericks, and the consequences and impacts of their behaviour.

## **2.2 Political mavericks – simple rebellion?**

The novelist Kevin Patterson observed that “The whole world loves a maverick and the whole world wants the maverick to achieve something nobler than simple rebellion” (2000, p. 63). Mavericks, perhaps, have the opportunity to define what their party stands for by challenging party orthodoxy and forcing those who support the status quo to defend it – to be the exception that proves the rule. However, one difficulty, already alluded to, is that the term “political maverick” is common enough in the vernacular, but found only spasmodically in scholarly literature. Where it does appear, Ditto and Mastronade (2009), Pulichino and Coughlin (2005), Gjerde (2006), Kenney (1988) and Linz (1994) are among the authors who do specifically discuss “maverick” in the context of politics and politicians.

Ditto and Mastronade (2009) conducted three studies into political maverickism in the United States. Their research highlighted the strategic challenges faced by maverick politicians in a “polarized, party-centric political culture” (2009, p. 298). They were interested in the way mavericks are viewed by voters with a pre-existing partisan preference, and found that when the debate was framed to evoke desirable personality traits such as independence and personal integrity, maverick politicians were liked even when they were members of the participant’s own party. However, when the electorate

was required to consider specific policy positions, evaluation of maverick politicians conformed to a “classic similarity-attraction pattern”: opposing party mavericks were viewed more positively than party-line politicians, but own party mavericks were evaluated more negatively than party-line politicians (Ditto and Mastronarde 2009, p. 298). This the authors called “the paradox of the political maverick”.

Although Ditto and Mastronade bring an insight into how mavericks are perceived by voters (a subject given more consideration later in the chapter), their definition of a maverick is limited to politicians who cross the floor in parliament to “vote their conscience” (2009, p. 295) – something which is much rarer in Australia than the USA. They do, however, usefully identify certain maverick qualities, variously describing mavericks as “straight-talking”, “cross-partisan” and displaying “independence and authenticity” (2009, p. 295).

Other authors are more limiting. Pulichino and Coughlin (2005) in their research of how innovative policy is introduced into government decision making, restricts mavericks to “policy entrepreneurs”: a party politician who prosecutes a policy agenda. Linz (1994) is similarly constrained: he discerns “outsider” from “insider” politicians as “candidates not associated with or supported by any political party” (1994, p. 26). He goes on use “outsiders” and “mavericks” synonymously.

Kenney (1988) also regards outsiders as mavericks who gain their prominence separate from the party organisation (1988, p. 59), while Gjerde (2006) brings together the views of several authors, including Kenney and Linz, by concluding that:

... the outsider can be understood as a maverick in that he or she becomes politically known from outside the established political system. This does not mean that he is necessarily running as an independent candidate. It is more likely that he has party backing, but that the party in question is personalised and weak, established for the purpose of backing a presidential candidate. (Gjerde 2006, p. 10)

There is a problem with the outsider/insider dichotomy favoured by several of the authors, and that is the assumption that a maverick, to be a maverick, must eschew the party organisation. It is a central tenet of this study that mavericks *do* exist within a disciplined party. The conclusion is that these authors all contribute to an understanding

of the term “political maverick”, but none quite meet requirements here. Linz, Kenny, O'Donnell and Gjerde see mavericks as being outside an established political party, where the literature in Australia shows that mavericks can operate within a party. Ditto and Mastronade, and Pulichino and Coughlin, get closer by considering party mavericks, yet still are more concerned about perceptions of mavericks than the mavericks themselves.

Putting the literature together, it is possible to propose a definition relevant to this thesis as an aid to the discussion to follow. A political maverick might be: *An unpredictable, independent loner who cannot be relied upon to follow a prevailing orthodoxy in pursuing his or her relationships or his or her goals within a political party.*

**In Australia.** A review of the Australian popular literature and academic sources was undertaken to gain an over-view as to how and where the term “political maverick” has been applied in a local context. The News Ltd on-line database and the Proquest general literature database were scanned along with the four principal academic journal databases – Proquest, World Wide Political Science Abstracts, Web of Knowledge and JSTOR – on the key words “political” together with “maverick”; along with “political” together with the maverick synonyms, “non-conformist”, “radical”, “rebel”, “misfit”, “dissenter” and “iconoclast”. Synonyms were included to ensure that all descriptors of maverick-like behaviour were captured.

Figure 2.2 is a “snap-shot” or an illustration of how the term “political maverick” is used in the academic literature and the media. It is not intended to be a complete review or “content analysis” of the extant literature. News Ltd was selected because it holds over 65% of the newspaper market in Australia, which was considered sufficient for an adequate indication. (Fairfax does not have a complete searchable database.) The table contains world-wide references, not just Australian. There would be an unknown degree of multiple counting, and no attempt was made to review all of the items to assess the subject matter. Some, or many, may not even be referring to politicians.

	<i>Popular and general literature</i>		<i>Academic and scholarly literature</i>			
<i>“Political” with ...</i>	<i>Hits in the News Ltd press</i>	<i>Hits in Proquest – general literature</i>	<i>Hits in Proquest – scholarly journals only</i>	<i>Hits in World Wide Political Science Abstracts</i>	<i>Hits in Web of Knowledge</i>	<i>Hits in JSTOR</i>
maverick	133	68	2	8	6	18
non-conformist	2	3	0	0	0	2
rebel	0	32	1	1	0	64
radical	14	172	12	4	1	545
misfit	2	9	0	0	0	4
dissenter	0	91	8	0	0	22
iconoclast	0	3	0	0	1	7

Figure 2.2 Hits “political maverick” and synonyms 72 months to 31 Dec 2010

However, it does allow some relevant observations to be made about the general use of the term. First, it confirms that the expression “political maverick” is much more widely used in the popular and general literature than in scholarly work. That is one indication that there has been a relative neglect by previous researchers, and that this research is worthwhile. Further, a review of the academic writings shows that there is no scholarly consensus on what the term means, or who a political maverick is. Just as in the popular press, “political maverick” is used in these writings as a general or vernacular descriptor or, as previously discussed, as a synonym for an independent or “outsider” politician.

A review of the items shows that “political maverick” frequently describes non-politicians. For example, a business journal has published tips on “how to spot a political maverick in the work-place” (Lloyd 2003). Similarly, “political maverick” is used to describe those who are involved with or comment on politics, but are not elected members. Diverse examples include political staffers (Crikey.com.au 2003); those who write about politics (Dreher 2004); and thinkers, philosophers and political commentators such as early twentieth century crime writer G. K. Chesterton (Spayde 2003).

With regard to synonymous terms, there appeared to be no pattern or outcome to help with the definitional task. There is no indication that a synonym is greatly used in place of the term “maverick”. The terms political “rebel”, “radical” and “dissenter” are well represented in the JSTOR scholarly and Proquest general literature searches, however an examination of these items showed the vast majority not to relate to politicians at all. (Most referred to “trouble spots” around the world where rebels, in the sense of armed or illegal insurgencies, were the subject of the items.)

Surprising, considering the frequency of use, is that many political dictionaries do not include the term in their lexicon. Of those that do, Comfort (1995) sees a political maverick as “an unpredictable loner who cannot be relied upon to follow the party line”, and Safire (2008, p. 417) as “one who is unorthodox in his political views and disdainful of party loyalty, who ‘bears no man’s brand’”. O’Donnell (1990, p. 148) is a little more expansive:

... ‘maverick’ connotes someone who is wayward, eccentric – an outsider.  
Thus a maverick politician is someone who does not belong to any party or  
who, if he or she does, is conspicuously non-conformist.

Perhaps “political maverick” is so descriptively powerful in itself that writers have not felt the need to investigate meaning further; one of those fundamental terms taken so much for granted that it has escaped scrutiny. Notwithstanding, the conclusion to draw from Figure 2.2 is that “political maverick” has a meaning which cannot be readily substituted with a synonym. Political maverick has a specific meaning that should be identifiable; if the definition was a contested one, it would be based on fundamentally different values which could neither be reconciled or eliminated. That does not appear to be the case. When someone is being described as a political maverick the user is not being vague, but reasonably specific even though the use can be in different ways in different contexts. The challenge is to determine how the colloquial uses and appearances of the term can be synthesised into a useful definition.

American political scientist Hanna Pitkin was faced with the same dilemma: how to settle on a scholarly definition for a term that is applied in vernacular context. She was speaking about the concept of “political representation” but what she says has validity here:



For the social philosopher, for the social scientist, words are not ‘mere’; they are the tools of his trade and a vital part of his subject matter. Since human beings are not merely political animals but also language-using animals, their behaviour is shaped by their ideas. What they do and how they do it depends upon their concepts through what they see ... Our words define and delimit our world in important ways, and this is particularly true of the world and social things. (Pitkin 1967, p. 1)

Drawing on the work of the Vienna Circle positivist philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and others, Pitkin concludes that a varied usage is not the same as a vague usage. “Quite the opposite: the need for making distinctions is exactly contrary to the vagueness which results from the failure to distinguish” (1967, p. 8). In the field of her study she felt it feasible to give an identifiable scholarly meaning to otherwise general words, which then can be applied in different but controlled ways in different contexts. Thus, faced with the general nature of words, Pitkin explores the field of language philosophy in an attempt to make the language explicit:

Recent work in philosophy suggests that, even if we know perfectly well how to use a word, use it unhesitatingly and correctly, and understand others who use it, we may yet be unable to define it completely and explicitly, to say what we know. (1967, pp. 6-7)

Applying Pitkin’s methodology, it is possible to arrive at a usable definition of political maverick which holds true for what a political maverick does and is like, as long as we accept that one can be a political maverick in a large number of different circumstances. So the basic meaning of “political maverick” will have very different applications depending on the circumstances and that it is quite valid for political mavericks to be members of parliament, journalists, business people and even as philosophers.

Questions about what a political maverick is cannot be separated from what political maverick means; and because the term political maverick is applicable in many circumstances, then it is axiomatic that a political maverick can be many things. The approach, then, becomes one of examining the concept of “political maverickism” – where it leaves off and where other phenomena begin – so that this study’s ultimate outcomes may add something to the definition, rather than the words themselves strictly and inflexibly defining the study.

The origins of the word “maverick” can be traced back to the United States in the mid 1800s and a Texan lawyer, Samuel A. Maverick, who took some cattle in settlement of a debt and, not knowing much about ranching, allowed them to roam free unbranded. The “law of the range” at the time decreed that anyone could take possession of an unbranded animal so Maverick’s herd was soon depleted. Such beasts and the men who took them quickly became known as mavericks. Maverick appears to have had a broader meaning in the early decades of the twentieth century, but has gradually narrowed to its contemporary and quite common use to depict anyone who is “an independent individual who does not go along with a group” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2003).

Maverick as an adjective or noun was used in United States politics as early as the 1880s to describe rebel or independent politicians, so it clearly has maintained that meaning at least in the United States, although British and Australian dictionaries of the 1950s and 1960s also describe a maverick as a “masterless person, a rover” (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1964). This indicates that, for some time, at least in the British Commonwealth, maverick had a meaning more literally aligned to the wandering cattle, than to the independent loners that took them. Whatever the etymology, there appears to be little disagreement amongst contemporary references. Five popular dictionaries were consulted on the word maverick with the following results:

- A person who thinks and acts in an independent way, often behaving differently from the expected or usual way. (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2004a)
- An independent individual who does not go along with a group. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2003)
- One that refuses to abide by the dictates of or resists adherence to a group; a dissenter. (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 2000)
- Somebody who holds independent views and who refuses to conform to the accepted or orthodox thinking on a subject. (Encarta World English Dictionary 2004b)

- A person who thinks and behaves independently, esp. one who refuses to adhere to the orthodoxy of the group to which he or she belongs. (Wordsmyth Dictionary-Thesaurus 2004c)

From the above it can be seen that a maverick displays one principal characteristic – independence. But it is an independence that is more than just going it alone; it is independence along with a rejection of a group orthodoxy. This supports the decision to limit the case study to “party mavericks”; belonging to a group, at least initially, is an important component of maverickism.

The analysis supports Pitkin’s proposition that it is valid to give an identifiable meaning to otherwise general words broad enough to cover all applications in various contexts. Pitkin accepts that a single definition is not necessarily difficult, but it is knowing how the words are used that is the vital element in knowing what the thing is.

Political theorists give us, as it were, flash-bulb photographs taken from different angles. But each proceeds to treat this partial view as the complete structure. It is no wonder, then, that the various photographs do not coincide ... the solution does not lie in presenting one more photograph. (Pitkin 1967, p. 10)

Pitkin’s view is compelling: one more photograph of “political maverick” will not add much to this discussion, either. Authors previously referred to such as Ditto and Mastronade (2009) do not need to argue over a definition in their studies of mavericks because there is little ambiguity in the meaning. Consequently, it is not intended here to propose a special definition or claim to have discovered any “new” meaning of the words.

However, in the sections to follow, it is possible to outline some general criteria for party mavericks which will apply to the case studies later in the thesis. In summary:

- **Unpredictable.** The party maverick will be volatile and difficult to predict, particularly in response to party policy positions.
- **Owned issue agenda.** The party maverick will be known for a personal issue agenda often at odds with that of his/her party.

- **In conflict with the party organisation.** Party mavericks will disagree or be in dispute with the party hierarchy and/or with the party rules. They will “buck the system”.
- **“Conviction” politicians.** The party maverick will often be seen as a person of “integrity” who is “straight-talking” and “sticks to their guns”, often against the party line.
- **“Celebrity” politicians.** The party maverick will use the media spotlight more effectively than the party and tend to occupy a “celebrity” status with the media and the voters.

## 2.3 Insights into maverick success

As argued above, scholars and journalists alike know what they mean when they use the term and that the everyday, vernacular meaning is valid: a political maverick is an unpredictable, independent loner who cannot be relied upon to follow a prevailing orthodoxy in pursuing his or her relationships or his or her goals within a political party.

Now that a definitional criteria of a political maverick for the study has been established, the discussion can turn to how the maverick might “fit into” the contemporary Australian political landscape. The purpose is to establish the likely characteristics of maverick behaviour for investigation in the case studies.

One contention is that voters are so disengaged from politics that there is little motivation for them to become interested in politicians at all. It is much easier – more “rational” – to make the bare minimum investment in the voting process. As Norris (2003, p. 20) observes, citizens commonly know little about a government’s record, the party leaders, or the policy platforms of the parties. Voters, she argues, are more guided by partisan identification, ideological shortcuts, and established ties between social and ethnic groups.

McAllister’s research leads him to suppose that, “by any standards, levels of political knowledge in the electorate are low” (McAllister 2001). Based on analysis of a survey of voters in the 1997 Australian federal election he found that the median voter could

only answer correctly two out of seven factual statements about political institutions. McAllister concluded that the results suggest a high level of political ignorance in line with findings in the United States (McAllister 2001). Later research (Bean et al. 2002; McAllister and Pietsc 2010) further show that Australian voters struggle to understand policies in depth.

Paying attention to a maverick, therefore, requires effort: the major parties saturate the campaigns and manage the news cycle so that, if the voters are paying the minimum of attention, how does the maverick get a look-in? One explanation is that mavericks engage the public better.

The argument that voters act primarily out of ignorance is well founded in the literature. Public choice theory is used most often to explain voter disconnection pointing to evidence such as low voter turnout and low voter knowledge of politics and political issues (Congleton 2001; Carpinì and Keeter 1996; Caplan 2001; Somin 2004; Downs 1957; Brennan and Lomansky 1993). Public choice theory gained prominence when one of the theory's pioneers, James Buchanan, was awarded the 1986 Nobel Prize. However, it had its genesis much earlier when the Scottish philosopher and economist, Adam Smith, declared the first law of the market to be self-interest, or the profit motive. Smith's seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), is his classic treatise on economic liberalism. The underlying tenet is the assumption that people, whether expressing choice through the marketplace or the ballot box, have as their main motive concern for themselves (Shaw 2005).

In regard to politics, public choice theory assumes that the individual lacks an incentive to monitor or analyse candidate policies: they are largely ignorant of political issues and this ignorance is rational (Caplan 2001). Rational because one vote cannot possibly influence an election – the direct impact of casting a well-informed vote is almost nil. Therefore taking an interest in the policies of candidates and parties, or even voting at all, is not worthwhile to the individual (Downs 1957).

However, Australia is one of the few western democracies with compulsory voting – surely that leads to a better informed and engaged electorate? Compulsory voting does have a positive impact on turn-out (Louth and Hill 2005, p. 34) but there is little evidence that Australians are more engaged than those from non-compulsory voting

countries. Public choice theory determines that the most fundamental cause of ignorance resides in the problem created by the insignificance of any individual vote in determining an electoral outcome (Somin 2004 p. 15). Turnout may be high in Australia because it is the law to vote, but there is no greater incentive, according to public choice, for Australians to become better informed voters than, say, their USA counterparts – an individual's vote in either country is very unlikely to make a difference.

One vote has so small a probability of affecting electoral outcomes that a realistic egoist pays no attention to politics; he chooses to be, in economic jargon, rationally ignorant. (Caplan 2006)

If the ignorant voter hypothesis has validity, then it would be expected that voters will make only the minimum investment in acquiring knowledge of politics, politicians and their policies. Political scientists since Downs (1957) have hypothesized that more information leads to a higher voter interest in elections. Somin (2004) argues that the better informed the voter the greater benefit to democracy and therefore society. Voters, he maintains, should be in a position to choose between opposing candidates on the basis of “the preferences that people have if their information were perfect”. Perfect information is impossible for anyone to acquire, he concedes, however minimally informed voters should at least be aware of the basic trade-offs between alternative policies. He concludes that:

Few dispute the well-established conclusion that most individual voters are abysmally ignorant of even very basic political information ... the sheer depth of most individual voters' ignorance is shocking to observers not familiar with research. (2004, p. 3)

So if Somin is to be believed, if voters were educated more about policies they would make more informed choices. However, many authors believe that the “facts” of a policy have little to do with vote choice. The way people learn about their politicians and vote is discussed later in this chapter and in the case studies, but for purposes here Louw's (2005, p.16) assertion, that raising political awareness is a “game of impression management”, provides a more pertinent insight into voter behaviour. The maverick, according to Louw, grabs the attention of potential voters, holds that attention, and

delivers information – largely to “passive citizens” who are “frequently only marginally interested in politics”.

Political outsiders are the citizens/electorate who are passive consumers of the myths, hype and images disseminated by the mass media. They consume what semi-insiders (such as journalists) and insiders (such as spin-doctors) construct and disseminate to them. The majority of citizens appear content to be passive outsiders – their participation in the political process being limited to voting occasionally for those candidates pre-selected and pre-packaged by political parties. (Louw 2005, p.18)

This is a concept taken up by Mark Latham (the subject of a later case study) who sees that the main division in society, like Louw, is between the “insiders” and “outsiders” of the system; that is, on the “inside” are the elites in the media, corporate sector, bureaucracy and parliament who control the political process, and on the “outside” the majority of Australians “from the suburbs”, excluded from politics (Latham 2003, pp. 10-11). The prospective characteristic of the maverick is therefore an ability to “manage the impressions” of the “rationally ignorant” voter.

The question follows, how does the maverick “cut through” this fog of ignorance and disinterest? One possible response comes from the theory of issue ownership. Issue ownership theorists hold that at any given time some issues are more important than others and can be elevated in the mind of voters. The aim for a politician, therefore, is to “own” the issues that are foremost in the electors’ collective mind. Petrocik (1996, p. 826) defines the concept:

The theory of issue ownership finds a campaign effect when a candidate successfully frames the vote choice as a decision to be made in terms of problems facing the country that he is better able to 'handle' than his opponent.

In general, issues are naturally owned by parties and candidates on the “right” while some fall evidently to those on the “left”. Every party has its own inherent terrain where it claims its voters, analogous to a sporting team with the home crowd advantage. Received wisdom is that Labor benefits when issues such as health, education and social welfare dominate the headlines, the Liberals when it is the economy, interest rates or border protection. Dick Morris, former political advisor to

United States president Bill Clinton, maintained that it didn't matter who was the most effective debater or who was “right” or “wrong” on the issue; what mattered was whether the issue was *your* issue: "If it was, you won. If it was not, they won" (in Costello 2003).

It is interesting and valid to enquire if mavericks “carve out” separate issue territory. Issue ownership is a useful “shorthand” for the relatively disengaged voter to use in making their vote choice, and voters know that it is a party in government that has the power to implement policies as law. To be effective, does the maverick “cut through” these issue stereotypes?

The blurring of the traditionally held notions of issue territory for the parties (McGregor 1999; Salusinszky 2003) may help the maverick. If voters no longer strongly associate one party or the other with particular issues, there may be an opportunity for the maverick to fill a void, as it is crucial to own the issues that count when the votes are cast.

A candidate's campaign is therefore, as Petrocik (1996, p. 827) sees it, a "marketing" effort. The goal is to achieve a strategic advantage by making problems which reflect owned issues the criteria by which voters make their choice. Candidates will attempt to elevate issues that they own to be key vote determinates at election time, while attempting to neutralise issues that naturally reside with other candidates.

Knowing the important issue and elevating them in the voters' mind is still not enough – the candidate must know how to frame the issue. In Petrocik's (1996, p. 827) view the median voter is uncertain about what represents a serious problem, lacks a clear preference about social issues, is normally disinclined to impose a consistent ideology on issues, and inclined to view elections as choices about resolving problems and not about the specifics of the resolution.

This is consistent with the views of Caplan (2007), Brent (2004) and Rabinowitz and MacDonald (1989): vote choice is largely irrational and selective. The key is not what policies candidates pursue, but what problems they can resolve.



... electoral politics is about relative not absolute choices. For many in the electorate their choice represents what they see as the lesser of two evils rather than a positive and hopeful embrace of the party they are voting for. So how choices are framed and, in particular, how one side is able to portray the other are crucial to success. (Tiffen 2006, p. 2)

The implication is that voters are prepared to believe that almost any problem is important and are susceptible to priming and framing by candidates who compete amongst each other to be the best "fixer" (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Krosnick and Kinder 1990). An important implication is that the maverick must offer strong, often emotional, stands on issues of importance to the voter in order to sway them; general policy positions are not sufficient (MacDonald et al. 1991).

Brennan and Lomansky similarly hold that votes are not straightforward statements of voters' preference between parties or candidates, but "disconnected in a fundamental way" (1993, p. 1), and that since the probability of a voter casting the decisive ballot is so small, most voting is an expressive, symbolic act, rather than instrumental (1993, p. 24).

In summary, there are many implications for the maverick politician in the "science" of electoral success, vote choice, issue ownership, issue framing and issue elevation. In modern Australian campaigning it is the party and party leaders that dominate the political landscape and it is through this "fog" that the maverick must prevail. But because he or she *is* a maverick it is axiomatic that a stand on issues must be taken that is different to their party's line. So if voters, generally "rationally ignorant", are seeking answers to problems, it is for the mavericks to frame the debate to a better degree than the party. Or at least convince the electorate on important issues that they can persuade the party or influence outcomes. It is for the maverick to promote issues of concern to their constituents irrespective of the party's platform or natural agenda. To this end, the first question is presented:

*Question 1. Are Mavericks electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents?*

If issue ownership is important to the maverick, then it is worthwhile to gather some insights into how mavericks communicate with their voters. The maverick's messages must be delivered via the conduit of the media, and it is through that process that many messages get "twisted", as the following cautionary tale notes.

First, the media distorts events, generally with a negative bias. To put it simply, bad news sells. Second, we all know a lot less than we think we do. If you've ever been involved in anything that gets covered in the media, you know that the press never gets it quite right. Throw in what psychologists call "confirmation bias" – seeing only what you want to see and you realize that all of your opinions are based on distortions. That makes virtually everything we read or understand what Nassim Taleb calls "a narrative fallacy" – a story we tell ourselves that says more about us than it does about what is actually going on. (Vardy 2008)

Voters, however, do not insist that politicians tell the truth; rather politicians are judged on their reliability and ability to fix problems, as discussed above. It is not the truth that matters, therefore, it is something else. What voters really want are politicians who are believable and can deliver on promises – those with a vision of where they are going and what they want to achieve: the conviction politician.

Politicians are meant to be different. Those who change their policies to suit the public mood look unprincipled. The most admired politicians stick to their guns, the way Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher did. "Conviction politician" is a compliment. Those who adjust their policies to suit the prevailing wind are derided as "flip-floppers". (Skapinker 2008)

Uhr (2007, p. 48), despite lamenting the low levels of voter trust in politicians, gets more to the point by seeing that it is not necessarily "truthfulness" that is the most important political trait; rather, as he calls it, the "terms of trust", which he argues are analogous with notions of legitimacy, confidence, respect, credibility and conviction:

... citizens are prepared to trust those governments whose leading representatives have demonstrated their reliability and so have won their confidence – which literally means 'faith', particularly faith in the reliability of representatives to do what the community requires. (Uhr 2007, p. 48-49)

The implication for mavericks is that the "conviction politician" is a politician whom the public believes, believe in their own issue agenda (Kelly 2003; Shanahan 2002). It is not a matter of being honest - it is a matter of being seen as believable and delivering on promises. But attempting to ascertain why some politicians are perceived in conviction terms, and why others are not, is difficult to establish. For example, John Howard was consistently described as a conviction politician (Kelly 2003; Shanahan 2002) but so were state Labor leaders Peter Beattie, Steve Bracks and Bob Carr (Carney and Hannan 2002; Rothwell 1999; Steketee 2003). Beattie and Bracks were completely different in personality and leadership style from Howard, and Carr a different personality again, so it is difficult to conclude that conviction politics can be identified in terms of personality traits. Perhaps notions of conviction are hard to separate from those of leadership and authority, a "temporal twilight zone" (Wanna and Williams 2005, p. 14)?

If "conviction" is a preferred characteristic, how is the maverick to portray it? It is clear that being "truthful" is not the whole answer, rather the more amorphous attributes of "believability" and "strength". Conviction, for all its reported benefits and attributes, nevertheless remains a nebulous concept, difficult to describe and difficult to ascribe. "Conviction politician", like "man of the people", to scholars is not much more than a buzz-phrase, a journalistic construction, with little substantial meaning – an "empty accolade showered by excitable commentators" according to Brent (2005b). Notwithstanding the views of the sceptics, "conviction" is widely applied in political reporting and is therefore an interesting and valid subject for discussion in the case studies; and it is reasonable to assume that maverick politicians, like all politicians, will aspire to qualities that the voters find attractive.

If conviction is a desirable attribute, then how is a maverick to convey it? It has been argued that most voters use short-cuts, stereotypes and impressions to make their voting decisions, rather than any careful reading of the policies of the political parties or candidates. In short, most people are just not that interested in politics. But they are interested in "celebrity" – much more interested.

Considerable political and media attention that has been focussed on the phenomenon of "celebrity politics". According to 't Hart and Tindall (2009) "star power" defies conventional accounts of democratic leadership. It enables, they argue, a form of

leadership driven by fame and admiration, rather than by election, representation and accountability.

It is leadership by the well-known, not necessarily leadership by the well qualified. In an era of boundless mass communication worldwide and 'entertainment culture' merging seamlessly with 'high culture' star power feels a lot more potent and 'in tune' than electoral power. Unless, of course, the two are aligned, with one reinforcing the other and vice versa. (t Hart and Tindall 2009, p.4)

It is clear that many politicians have seen the potential of star power, and many have tried to exploit it. As one journalist put it (Megalogenis 2008) "to a visitor from outer space, it would be hard to distinguish the job description of Prime Minister today from that of talk show or game show host." And likewise Hogan (2007, p. 13), writing on the modern phenomenon of anti-politics, observed "Information has had to yield to entertainment; facts have become subservient to images ... The overall impact in virtually all democratic societies with a free press has been the trivialising of politics and an emphasis on personality rather than policy".

Such criticisms of the blurring of politics and celebrity centre on concerns over the trivial (entertainment) infecting the serious (politics); of appearances and images dominating politics (Street 2004, p. 439). But the reality is that that mavericks cannot afford to ignore the importance of "celebrity" to the voting public, and that they need to master celebrity politics to maximise their conviction credentials.

Undoubtedly, as Street (2004, p. 435) argues, the dominance of a media culture is the driving force behind the campaign focus on celebrity. The politics of celebrity accepts and promotes a blurring of the boundaries between politics, show business and sport. Street sees that the increasing reliance on television as a medium of communication tends to "shift the criteria by which politicians are judged and by which they operate" (2004, p. 435). Television's intimacy, he sees, with its use of close-ups and one-to-one conversations, focuses attention on politicians' "human" qualities: either politicians learn the skills of the medium or those already skilled in it (the celebrity) come to dominate it (Street 2004). Willet (in Sheridan 2009) notes a major factor is a generational shift in how Australians socialise, where people have "retreated into the home" around large televisions and entertainment systems, with a small group of

friends. This contrasted with previous generations who would meet at the pub after work, or in clubs and societies, and discuss current affairs.

It is not just rubbing shoulders with celebrities that is important: many politicians now become the celebrity. As McAllister (2007, p. 571) notes, politics has become increasingly personalised. With advancement in the growth of the electronic media, politicians are now anointed celebrity status by talk shows and reality television, simply because of the position they hold. Given the pervasion of “new media” into politics and accepting that the phenomenon of celebrityhood is an inevitable product of social change, is the maverick likely to embrace the cult of personality that celebrity politics embodies? Because the maverick is different, he or she will inevitably invite publicity and be ideally placed to capitalise on a celebrity-obsessed media.

Notwithstanding, the mavericks for this study are not career independents and are, or have been, constrained, at least to some extent, by the party platform and rules. To be selected for endorsement on the party ticket they must be seen to be “team players” and abide by the party discipline imposed by its leaders. But Keane (2002, p. 13) argues that the success of maverick political figures is partly explained by their ability to represent and reflect the interest of many who do not respond or identify with traditional political communication.

There is much to know about the interaction and interface between politics, the media and the personal qualities that appear to spell success for the individual candidate. Are mavericks, in divining their political messages, seen by voters as better communicators or acting with more “conviction” than their non-maverick colleagues? And to what extent are mavericks considered celebrities in the community, and how well do they play the “celebrity game”? Subsequently, how the maverick contends with the friction between having to comply with, on one hand, the “packaged” party media message, and on the other, the “celebrity opportunity” that presents itself is an interesting task for the study. This suggests a second research question:

*Question 2. Is one explanation for maverick success that the maverick is a more accomplished communicator than the party loyalist - better at “conviction politics” and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of “celebrityhood”?*

To complete this discussion of insights into maverick success, the focus now turns from the political message to the party and the effect party institutional control has on the maverick. Party discipline is the ability of a political party to persuade its members to support the policies of the party and is usually seen as a measure of control that a leader has over the party's members. Conventional wisdom has it that divisions within a party are bad for its electoral popularity (Dodson 2005a)

Party discipline tends to be stronger in parliaments such as the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia in which a vote against the government – “crossing the floor” – particularly on important issues like money bills or confidence motions, can cause the government to “collapse”. Party discipline is much weaker in presidential systems such as the United States where members often cross party lines on a given vote.

Australia's federal system of government is in effect a bipolar system. On one side of the political divide is the centre-right coalition of the Liberal and National Parties (LNP). This coalition has seen several guises since Federation, tracing its roots to 1909 when the Protectionists and Free Traders buried their differences to fight the rising Australian Labor Party, and then on to the United Australian Party when the conservative forces again reorganised in 1931 under the prime ministership of Joe Lyons (Carroll 2004, p. 136).

After the death in office of Lyons, the UAP became impotent and irrelevant during the war years until, in 1945, Robert Menzies cobbled together the UAP and other anti-Labor remnants to form the Liberal Party, which endures in its current incarnation (Carroll 2004, p. 141). The Nationals are the successor to the Country Party, which began from agrarian roots in 1920. The Liberal and the Nationals have been in largely permanent coalition since the end of the Second World War, and for purposes of the analysis can largely be treated as factions within the one party.

On the other side, the ALP is centre-left and founded in the working-classes and trade union movement, built on worker unity in the 1890s when wages were cut and unions crushed by colonial parliaments. In this environment of strikes and lockouts, unionism took hold and flourished, with huge numbers of workers becoming involved in disputes in the factories, shearing sheds and dock fronts. The defeat of the maritime strike in 1890 and the shearers' strike in 1891, laid the framework for the labour movement's

entry into parliamentary politics, principally in New South Wales (Svensen 1989, p. 6). By Federation, the Labor Party had entrenched caucus solidarity.

Australian parliaments have almost always consisted of one of the two major party groups in majority government, in contrast to, for example, many other Western democracies where minority and coalition governments are much more common. The result is that Australia today has one of the most disciplined party systems in the democratic world (Uhlmann 2009).

Crossing the floor is the often-used barometer for measuring dissent (Kam 2002; McKeown et al. 2005; Rodan 2005; Ditto and Mastronarde 2009) probably because it readily measurable and empirical. But it is not a useful measure or indicator of dissent in modern Australian politics; because it now occurs so rarely (Bennister 2007), it is evident that mavericks have developed other ways to rebel so as to avoid the ultimate sanction – dismissal from the party – that crossing the floor risks. There are other factors to dissent and other ways to show dissent, and how the subjects of the case studies express that dissent will provide some interesting insights into maverick success.

It is not possible to isolate notions of party discipline and institutional control from the influence of the leader; many writers and observers believe that leadership has become so politically important over the past twenty years to the extent that some argue that the Westminster system is converging with the presidential (McAllister 2004, p. 1). The prior discussion demonstrates how important the trappings of celebrity are to politicians, and it is the celebrity status of the party leader that is often the focus of the campaign.

For example, the promotion of the leader in campaign advertising and in political “branding” is now more prominent than party symbols. Parties are routinely labelled after the leader, rather than the party they lead. Consequently, the leader’s authority in modern Australian politics is almost absolute and he or she holds unprecedented power in shaping political careers (Bramston 2003, p. 56); it is this control over careers that is the principle tool of the party for enforcing discipline (Kam 2002, p. 4; Dodson 2005a).

Kam’s research rejects the notion that a parliamentarian’s decision to dissent or remain loyal to the party is based purely on that parliamentarian’s policy position; rather, he

proposes that the leader's control of the member's career prospects is the most important element.

This career advancement-dissent model starts from the assumption that MPs desire electoral security, office perks, and policy influence. Institutional rules, specifically the Cabinet's monopoly on power and the doctrine of collective responsibility fuse promotion and policy influence. As a consequence, MPs are institutionally limited to choosing between electoral security on the one hand, and promotion and policy influence, on the other. Dissent comes about when the promise of career advancement is not sufficient to offset the electoral costs of unpopular policies. (Kam 2002)

As one reviewer puts it “If Kam is right, that parliamentary parties are no-longer unitary actors and that party cohesion is fragile and conditional, this calls into question much of the established wisdom about how parliamentary government works” (Hicks n.d.). Kam tested his career advancement-dissent model across four Westminster jurisdictions – Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia – and found empirical support across countries and across time.

He also found that the social norms and conventions of the party and the parliament had a reinforcing capacity, shoring up party cohesion when formal party rules were insufficient to elicit loyalty (2002, p. v). Kam's contention is that unpopular party policies, and therefore electoral insecurity for the individual politician, triggers dissent, and that that dissent is tempered by either the promise of career advancement or policy influence (2002, p. 4). Politicians are therefore institutionally limited, and this institutional power in modern Australian parliamentary politics is almost absolute, as the discussion above on crossing the floor demonstrates.

It has been held that politicians, axiomatically, desire policy influence, and for the maverick that may mean having to sacrifice that influence for their maverick views (and electoral security). That contention has some parallel with earlier contentions that mavericks might be “conviction politicians” who “own the issues” important to their constituents – mavericks, perhaps, stick to a popular policy despite the position of the party.



It is a different question, nonetheless, to consider if and to what extent the maverick influences the party's policy and decision-making processes. It may be that the maverick goes against the party line but that does not mean that their maverick actions have no effect on the party agenda. The maverick, by bringing new ideas forward, by stretching the boundaries within the party, by challenging the status quo, might be the catalyst for new policy positions within the party, even if they have to pay a personal price in terms of career or indeed get no credit: the maverick as devil's advocate.

The likely implication is that mavericks are a positive vehicle for policy change within the political party, for facilitating reform and for transcending the conservative policy mindsets and practices of the major parties. Thus:

*Question 3. Are mavericks more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with policy influence and career within the party, or do mavericks have a significant impact on party decision-making and policy formulation?*

## **2.4 Summary**

The intention of this chapter has been to review the literature relevant to maverick behaviour in order to develop and refine questions to guide the case studies, that might explain the consequences and impacts of maverick politicians on contemporary Australian politics and political parties.

Mavericks may be electorally successful, it is suggested, because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents. The case studies will develop insights into the mavericks' expertise in issue ownership, particularly their skills in impression management, issue framing and self-marketing to the "rationally ignorant" and disengaged voter. In addition, the notion of "conviction" was explored, particularly in the context of celebrity politics. The research to follow will shed light on the maverick's ability to communicate to the voters, particularly how mavericks harness the artefacts, icons and expertise of the celebrity.

Finally, an important purpose of this research is to draw some insights and conclusions on the influence mavericks have on party policy and decision making. It was argued that in Australia the party leader has direct control over a politician's career and that therefore party discipline is extremely strong. Perhaps the maverick bucks the party line

because he or she is more interested in popularity, and therefore re-election, than supporting unpopular party policy? If so, is the consequence that the maverick forgoes policy influence and a career?

## **3 Methodology and research design**

### **3.1 Case study method**

The overall task of this thesis is to offer a structured account of the consequences and impacts of mavericks on Australian politics. While the previous chapter provided a select review of the literature in order to generate specific research questions, this chapter argues for a grounded, semi-inductive methodology to address those questions. More specifically, the analysis presented in the case studies that follow considers each research question systematically and consistently to provide theoretically informed accounts as to consequences and impacts of mavericks on Australian politics.

The case study is one of several ways of undertaking social science research. Each strategy has its place, its advantages and disadvantages, but for the purpose here the case study method is considered the most appropriate. Yin (2002) takes the position that the correct view of the different strategies is a pluralistic one:

There may be exploratory case studies, descriptive case studies, or explanatory case studies ... There may also be exploratory experiments, descriptive experiments, and explanatory experiments ... this does not imply that the boundaries between strategies – or the occasions when each is to be used – are always clear and sharp. Even though each strategy has its distinctive characteristics, there are large areas of overlap among them ... (Yin 2002, p. 4)

Thus, choosing a research methodology requires a contingency approach. Yin (2002, p. 4) proposes that, when deciding upon a methodology, the type of research problem and the extent to which the investigator has control over events are key considerations.

Explanatory or exploratory questions - such as those explored in this thesis - are particularly suitable to case study methodology (Gerring 2004, p. 15). This allows the researcher, according to Yin (2002, p. 6), access to techniques that best respond to the operational links traced over time or between events, rather than frequencies or incidences, which are predictive and better researched using archival records or surveys as in, for example, much quantitative research. The systematic case study analysis used here employs an analytical narrative where the cases are designed to assess the research

questions identified in the previous chapter. Because of the consistent use of data these questions are falsifiable.

The approach here is closely aligned to the methodological realist stance adopted by Christie et al. (2000, p. 9). Christie sees that a realist paradigm suits qualitative case studies that deal with underlying causal tendencies (Bhaskar 1978; Tsoukas 1989), and where the purpose is to identify and analyse variables, as this study does, in complex social and political situations (Outhwaite 1983). When there is little or no control by the researcher over events, case study methodology is preferred over experiment, which would only be available in circumstances where the researcher could manipulate the variables being observed. This is not possible or desirable in the context of the research problem here. The purpose is to explain real-life circumstances that are too complex – too chaotic – to be controlled within an experimental strategy. The intention is to describe mavericks given the political environment of contemporary Australia. Given these circumstances, case study is a valid methodology.

As with all research methodologies there are pitfalls and weaknesses (Yin 2002, pp. 9-10). One is a concern that it lacks rigour, where Yin places the blame with past researchers: “Too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions” (2002, p. 9). As a counter, this research is open to contrary findings and alternative explanations. Any alternatives are made explicit and the plausibility of rival explanations investigated, and where appropriate reduced by “ramification extinction” (Campbell in Yin 2002, p. ix).

A second commonly held criticism identified by Yin is that case studies provide little basis for scientific generalisation (2002, p. 10). This view, he argues, represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the case study methodology. Another way of explaining the validity of the case study is to point out that generalisations are rarely made from a single experiment. The most strongly held scientific positions are invariably founded on a multiple set of experiments which replicate the same phenomenon under different conditions. Likewise, the same approach is used with multi-case studies which replicate a consistent research protocol with different data sets in order to make conclusions based on replication logic. The goal of multi-case studies is to expand and generalise findings (Gerring 2004, p. 12).

The discussion in this section contends that the case study approach is justified because it is the method of empirical inquiry that best covers research into contextual conditions, in situations where phenomenon (the maverick politicians) and context (the political environment) are not always distinguishable in real-life situations.

The case study method provides a research agenda for establishing greater insight into boundaries and phenomena (Emory and Cooper 1991; Yin 2002). It provides an all-encompassing approach where the research is essentially explanatory in nature. As Luck, Jackson and Usher (2006, p. 104) assert “virtually every social scientific study is a case study or can be conceived as a case study because it is an analysis of social phenomena specific to time and space.” The case study was chosen here, therefore, because it is best placed to explain the causal links in real-life interventions of political mavericks in contemporary Australian politics – interventions that are too complex for experimental strategies

### **3.2 Methodological foundations**

The broad methodological objective is to generate and assess propositions which establish the influences on mavericks yet is sufficiently structured to be subject to falsification. The empirical accounts in the case studies are therefore designed to evaluate the research problem and answer the research questions, with a view to adding to the theoretical knowledge of the impacts mavericks have on Australian politics, in particular, on political parties.

This thesis adopts a “systematic approach” (Dahl 1992, p. 39), consistent with the thoughts American scholar David Truman who identified two basic requirements for adequate research into political behaviour: that research must grow out a precise statement, and that research must be essentially empirical; that is, be observable. Truman believed that “Properly speaking, political behaviour is not a ‘field’ of social science; in fact, it is not even a ‘field’ of political science ... it represents rather an orientation or point of view which aims at stating all the phenomena of a government in terms of the observed and the observable behavior of men” (Truman 1951, pp. 37-39).

Although Truman was an empiricalist he nevertheless understood that “the student of political behavior ... is obliged to perform his tasks in qualitative terms” (Truman 1951, pp. 37-39). He drew attention to the advantages of calling on the other social

sciences, accepting, for example, that “historical knowledge is likely to be an essential supplement to contemporary observation of political behavior.”

More recently, Marsh and Furlong (2002) are among the growing number of scholars who believe that the differences between positivists and behaviourists are beginning to dissolve. Saunders (2002) similarly acknowledges the inter-dependence of theory and observation; that normative questions are important and not easy to separate from empirical questions, and that other traditions have a key role to play in political and social analysis.

For modern behaviouralists, the ultimate test of a good theory is still whether or not it is consistent with observation – with the available empirical evidence. Modern behaviouralists are perfectly prepared to accept that different theoretical positions are likely to produce different observations. They insist, however, that, whatever ‘observations’ are implied by a particular theoretical perspective, those observations must be used in order to conduct a systematic empirical test of the theory being posited. (Saunders 2002, p. 52)

The defining feature of this study is its grounded, semi-inductive method. It is grounded because it is an iterative process of asking consistent research questions across multiple cases. The purpose is to develop theory, rooted in observation, about the consequences and impacts of mavericks on contemporary Australian politics. It is “semi-inductive” because, while it primarily uses inductive techniques to draw inferences from the multiple case studies, the conclusions and the questions derived from the existing literature in the previous chapter do have some deductive characteristics.

### **3.3 Data collection**

The search for evidence requires a protocol to guide the data collection, essential in multiple-case design to ensure that the data from each case is being collected in a consistent way to maximize reliability (Yin 2002, p. 63). Sources of evidence include documentation, archival records, media reports, scholarly sources, journals, other publications and researcher observation. The evidence is derived from a mixture of primary and secondary sources, depending on the context. Primary and secondary are relative terms, and any given source may be classified as either, depending on how it is used (Kragh 1989, p. 121).

This study is in the empirical behavioural tradition. As such, primary sources of evidence such as interviews and questionnaires were considered, but rejected for several reasons. First, there were concerns over reliability and consistency in drawing conclusions between the case studies because some of the case study subjects were not available, or gave an indication they would not participate. It was considered that the cross-case analysis would lack validity if the cases could not be researched consistently.

Second, interviewees may not tell the truth, or have poor or selective recall, or poor or inaccurate articulation. The risk of respondent bias – the tendency to create a false personal image – was considered too great. This potential bias in the responses would be difficult to mitigate or manage in the analysis. This is not to infer, necessarily, that the case study subjects would deliberately lie or give preferential answers; rather, that in a political context it is reasonable to expect the interviewee to give a political answer. At times, interviewees have reasons not to be truthful (Douglas 1976).

Third, and related to the above, is the danger of interviewees “self-referencing”; that is, processing information by relating it to aspects of oneself (Burnkrant and Unnava 1995). This is where the respondent, being interviewed as a maverick, behaves as a maverick; put another way, the interview becomes self-fulfilling. This is a version of the “Hawthorne effect”: a distortion of results caused by the respondents being aware that they are taking part in research (Rice 2008). It may be subconscious and unintentional, or it may be deliberate. The danger is that “elite” individuals who have been interviewed many times may be quite sophisticated in manipulating the interview process: politicians are well practiced at being in control. Interviewing the political elite is a “potential minefield” and the information obtained “may not always serve the purpose that was originally intended” (Lilleker 2003, p. 207).

Document review and analysis, upon which this thesis largely relies, is a legitimate method of gathering information for qualitative research. In that regard, this thesis is a form of critical discourse analysis in that it offers a perspective on contemporary literature and language – the discussions and criticisms of the time – and by doing so it recognises the constitutive potential of that literature. Farrelly (2010), writing on the contribution that critical discourse analysis can make to political studies, observes that without analysis contemporary language can become obscure:

Aspects of discourse can become relatively conventionalised in social practices, and therefore, because they are conventional ways of using language, their implications can become opaque to people using them. Discourse understood in this way should therefore be an important locus of analysis in political studies. (Farrelly 2010, p. 98)

So for this study, it is the language used to describe the case study subjects that is important. It is contemporary language that puts the mavericks into a political context and it is how this language is used and interpreted that is of interest here.

### **3.4 Case and chapter structure**

The research design here links the data back to the research problem and its questions – it is a rational model that flows logically from the research problem to the conclusions. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) summarise research design as a plan that:

... allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning casual relations among the variables under investigation. The research design also defines the domain of generalizability, that is, whether the obtained interpretations can be generalized to a larger population or to different situations.

In order to make meaningful interpretations and draw robust conclusions the research plan must ensure that, first, the data collected is relevant to the study, and second, that the results are effectively analysed. Yin (2002, p. 20), in recognising these imperatives, specifies five stages of effective case study research: (1) enunciate the study's problem; (2) identify its questions or propositions; (3) determine the units(s) of analysis; (4) link the data to the propositions; and (5) interpret the findings. This framework has been adapted for the chapter structure for this thesis which is depicted diagrammatically in Figure 3.1.



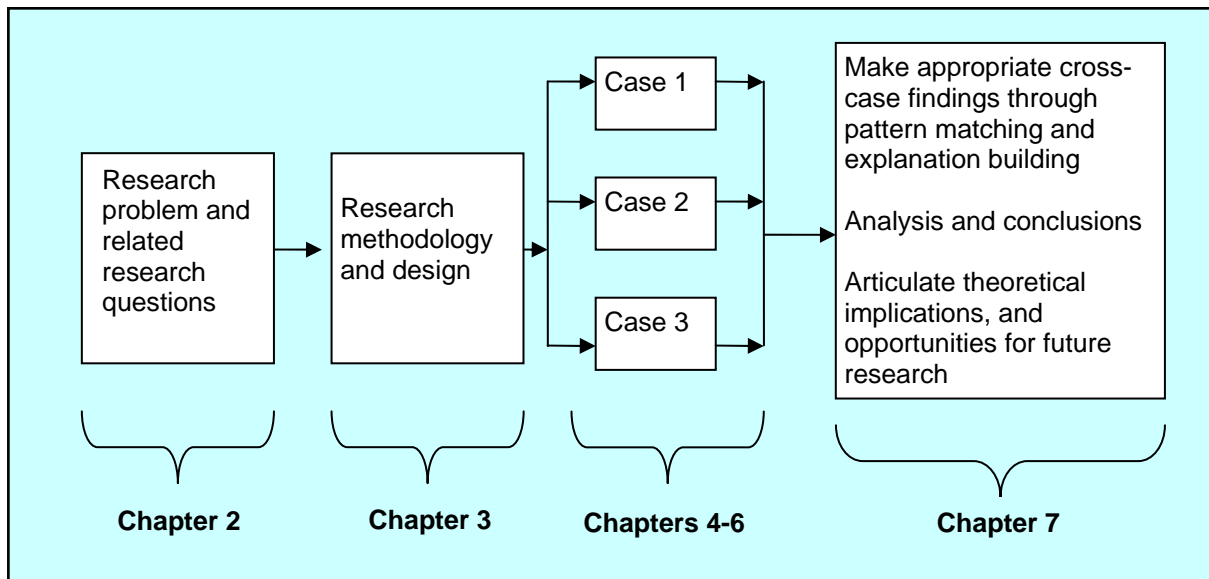


Figure 3.1 Research design

One reason for a multiple case study approach is to see if one case's findings are applicable to the other studies. This cross-case approach provides a degree of external validity. It may be, as alluded to above, that further study is needed to extend the analysis to other cases and contexts, particularly to mavericks beyond the boundaries that apply to these cases. The final quality control test is that of reliability. The purpose is to minimise errors and biases in the study. This study protocol and a detailed, justified research framework are two important contributors.

A consistent reporting structure is adopted across the case studies to maximise objective cross-case analysis and interpretation. The final stage of the research is to write up the cross-case report and to interpret the findings. Note that, although written to a consistent format, each individual case study is a "stand alone" procedure, in which evidence is sought regarding the research propositions and conclusions are drawn within each case. This requires an analytical strategy that treats the evidence fairly, produces compelling analytical conclusions and rules out, as much as possible, alternative interpretations (Yin 2002, p. 103).

Although interpretation of the findings comes at the end of the thesis, the analytical strategy in which those findings are evaluated is represented by the flow of information through the whole model. Under this regime it is the study questions that shape the data collection within the individual cases. The evidence is examined where appropriate for

plausible rival interpretations; that is, by looking at other implications and seeing how well they fit, reducing them as much as possible by “ramification extinction” (Garson 2008).

This is an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within real-life contexts with a logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and data analysis. In analysing the case studies a key strategy developed by Campbell (2002), “plausible rival hypotheses”, is preferred.

More and more I come to the conclusion that the core of the scientific method is not experimentation per se but the strategy connoted by the phrase plausible rival hypotheses. This strategy may start its puzzle solving with “evidence” or it may start with “hypothesis”. Rather than presenting this hypothesis or evidence in the context-independent manner of positivistic “confirmation” (or even of postpositivistic “corroboration”), it is presented instead in extended networks of implications that (while never complete) are nonetheless crucial to its scientific evaluation. (Campbell, in Yin (2002), p. ix.)

In many ways, a plausible rival hypotheses strategy in case study research is analogous to Popper’s (1963) “empirical falsifiability” as the criterion for distinguishing scientific theory.

### **3.5 The cases – units of analysis**

As referred to above, multiple-case methodology is often considered more convincing than single case, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust (Herriott and Firestone 1983) as it helps isolate variability. There are valid reasons for using single-case method in some circumstances (Gerring 2004, p. 4; Luck et al. 2006, p. 104), but here the multiple-case method is preferred principally because it allows for replication logic in the cross-case analysis (Yin 2002, p. 45). The individual case reports indicate how and why a particular research question was, or was not, answered, while the cross-case report indicates the extent of the replication and/or contrasting results.

The discussion in Chapter 2 established what a political maverick is by providing a useable definition. In many ways that was a straightforward task – deciding who fits the definition and who does not proved to be much more problematic. It is useful here to

repeat that definition: “A political maverick is an unpredictable, independent loner who cannot be relied upon to follow an orthodox or prevailing group norms in pursuing his or her relationships or his or her goals within a political party.” Figure 3.2 represents diagrammatically how a politician’s behaviour might be represented on a continuum as “degrees of maverickism”: at one end is the “extreme” maverick – the politician who shuns all party orthodoxy and is unlikely to be, or remain, a member of any party; at the other end is the dedicated party acolyte. Those who fit the definition can be seen to occupy the shaded area: they will display varying degrees of “maverickism” and in different ways.

The problem, then, is not one of definition, it is one of interpretation. Logically, the solution would be to apply the definition to the politicians to determine the subjects for the study. But that is not straightforward. How is a concept like “unpredictable” quantified? What factors qualify a “loner”? How, exactly, should “cannot be relied upon” be determined? There is also a question of time and “quantity”: should one “maverick act” (if such a thing could be quantified) from someone who is, otherwise, a steady team player qualify that person for the study? Or should “persistent” maverick behaviour be the criterion?

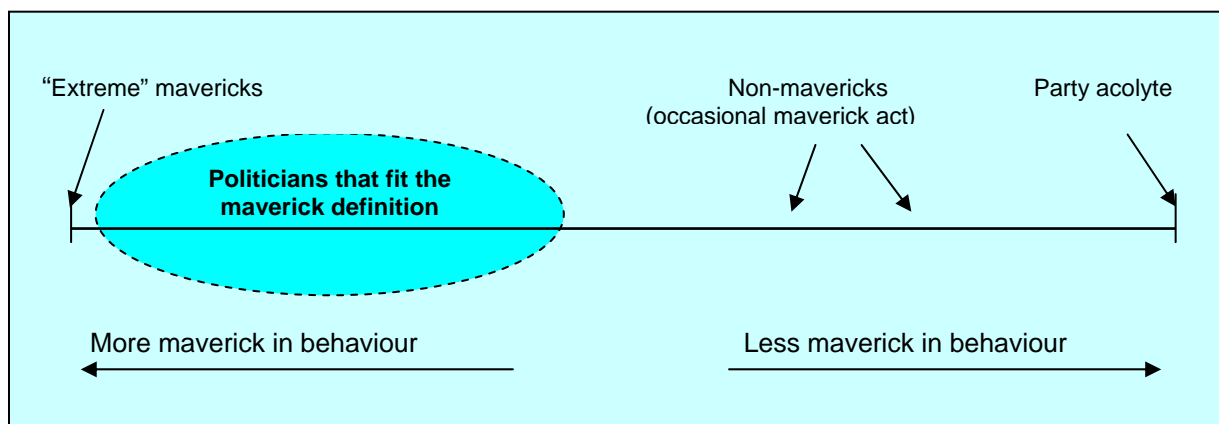


Figure 3.2 The maverick continuum

Therefore, measuring maverickism is a difficult and subjective task - just how “maverick” does someone have to be to qualify? Considerable thought was given to setting “evaluation criteria” to measure and select the subjects for the study. Tests were conceived such as:

- those rejected or censured by their party
- those who crossed the floor, or voted against their party
- those who made statements against party policy.

However, these criteria proved stubbornly difficult to quantify and apply. Certainly, they are all indicators of maverick behaviour, but problems of measurement and quantification arose with each attempt. Wherever a boundary was drawn on any one criterion, it became immediately arbitrary and difficult to defend. The conclusion is that an individual politician sits somewhere along the maverick continuum, but impossible to objectively justify the location. It became obvious that another approach was required.

It has been established that a vernacular definition – one that is generally agreed to – is readily discernible. It was shown, using reasoning derived from Pitkin (1967), that “political maverick” is of the class of expressions in the language that is used “unhesitant and correctly” by people to “say what we know”. Guided by Pitkin’s logic, the solution for this study was to let the way the definition is used in everyday language “select” the subjects for the study. This approach is consistent with the study’s critical discourse perspective outlined above.

The logic is this: those politicians who are *known and described* as political mavericks should form the focus for the study; or, rather than fit the person to the description, fit the description to the person. “Political maverick” is not an ambiguous term – those who use it know what it means. Would not politicians who are most frequently described thus, be more likely to *be* political mavericks? Further, the role of the media in creating the maverick phenomenon means that the extent to which “political maverick” is a media construct validates this approach.

This technique of using “mentions” in the media is similar to that used by Gans and Leigh (2009) in their identification of “public intellectuals” in researching media bias. Similar to this study, Gans and Leigh tally media mentions to make their determinations (Gans and Leigh 2009, p. 4). Figure 3.3 shows a summary of results for a data search for mentions of “political maverick” in the Australian media, for the period 31/10/03 – 31/10/08. That is, it shows the number of times individual politicians

(those that sit within the limitations set out in Chapter 1) were referred to as “maverick” in political opinion pieces, press items and news items. There were 43 politicians in total who received at least one “hit”. The six with the most hits are shown. (It is accepted that a “selection bias” is possible in using media hits as the selection tool. This is because the more senior and prominent the politician, the more they are covered in the press. Thus, there may be politicians just as “maverick” as the ones identified here, but do not have the same opportunity to be selected. This potential for bias is noted: here is a danger the thesis will import any failings of Australian political journalism and any hyperbole in reporting. However, the purpose here is not to select the “most” maverick politicians in Australia; rather to identify those who fit the definition and who have sufficient volume of material written about them to contribute to a meaningful study.)

<i>Politician</i>	<i>Total number of “hits” for [politic* AND maverick]</i>
Barnaby Joyce	64
Mark Latham	43
Bob Katter	27
Ross Lightfoot	14
Harry Quick	12
Petro Georgiou	12
The next most mentioned was Bill Heffernan (Lib, Senate) with 5 hits	

Figure 3.3 The Top Six – media hits “political mavericks” 31/10/03 – 31/10/08

These six politicians are clearly the most mentioned in the press during the study period. Figure 3.4 places them into cases, classifying them by:

- the party they represent;
- the House of Parliament in which they sit; and
- whether they remained in the party during the study period.

This classifications was adopted as a way of ensuring that, in using the top six, a reasonable “spread” across the parliament is achieved. It allows testing of the extent to which party membership is a factor in maverick behaviour. By ensuring the study

includes members from both Houses it allows for comparison between two electoral systems. Researching mavericks who have left the party, and those who remain, is also important to the study.

Case	Subjects	Senate		House of Reps		Remained a party member?
		LNP	ALP	LNP	ALP	
"The House"	Quick				✓	No
	Katter			✓		No
	Georgiou			✓		Yes
"The Senate"	Joyce	✓				Yes
	Lightfoot	✓				Yes
"The leader"	Latham				✓	No

Figure 3.4 The mavericks sorted into case studies

The real focus for the case studies is not explaining maverick behaviour but describing its consequences on the party. There are important justification for studying mavericks within the established political parties, not the least is that it is interesting and relevant – the vast majority of Australian politicians belong to one of the major parties. Election is “next to impossible” in Australia, McAllister and Farrell (2005, p.13) assert, without the benefit of one of the major party labels.

No doubt, within the broad meaning of “political maverick”, independent and minor party candidates are worthy of inquiry (Costar and Curtin 2004; Jaensch and Mathieson 1998). For example, Pauline Hanson, an independent who won a seat at the 1996 election after she was expelled from the Liberal party for perceived slurs against indigenous Australians, is often described as a maverick (Bolt 2006; Corder 2003). However, Hanson was not a party maverick and therefore outside the scope of this study. (Notwithstanding, her influence on an “anti-political” mood among Australian voters is noted in the conclusions to this thesis.)

Major party mavericks have the added burden of party discipline, and to discover how these mavericks cope with the party stricture is an important element of this research: why mavericks exists at all within political parties is central to explaining the maverick

paradox. Carney (2006) sees that in Australian political parties there are two types of politicians:

On both sides of politics, MPs generally break down into two categories: high-flyers who yearn to rule the roost and parade their achievements, knowledge and power, and ground dwellers who want to blend in and are content to tend the home patch, and demonstrate their loyalty to the cause. (Carney 2006)

Carney made these observations in the context of analysing the behaviour of a maverick, the Liberal's Petro Georgiou; as he describes him, a "genre buster". Because the majority of Australian voters identify with one party or the other (Farrell and McAllister 2005), if an Australian politician wants to achieve the maximum from his or her political career then a maverick path would not be the choice; he or she should join a political party and adhere to its party line, perhaps choosing one of Carney's two pathways, a high-flyer or a ground dweller. The trappings of political office, in terms of the highest salaries, prestige, ministerial positions and status, can really only be achieved, it will be argued, by becoming if not a party sycophant then at least a party loyalist, and certainly not a maverick. Kam (2006) makes the point:

The Prime Minister's monopoly over the distribution of preferment is a far more reliable means of ensuring members' loyalty. The rules of the game are simple: if the member of parliament wishes to climb the parliamentary career ladder, he or she must toe the party line.

And sometimes the prospect of promotion or favour is used by the party to control the potential maverick. Kam (2006) further notes that:

The Prime Minister's power over MPs' parliamentary careers is not without limit, of course. Some MPs must be brought into cabinet because they are too powerful and dangerous to leave on the backbench where they can openly challenge the Prime Minister.

One important task is to describe the conventional expectations of political success – that is, remaining within and moving up the party structure – and comparing and contrasting that with how mavericks measure success. It is acknowledged that it can be a difficult task to define the qualities of political success. Brodie (1984) argues that great political achievers are those who demonstrate qualities such as vision,

commitment to goals, a desire to improve, a willingness to take risks for the good of the people, and an ability to communicate these intentions. Alternatively, Stott-Despoja (2000) describes political achievers as those who demonstrate accountability, accessibility, and honesty.

Achievement is perceived as many things – as a politician, the opportunity to create a significant legacy can be greater than in many other areas – however, the opportunity to achieve as a politician is a delicate process, where circumstance and external factors can easily alter the balance between opportunity and outcome. It is this concept of success and the juxtaposition between party and maverick that is so intriguing.

Of the six subjects for the case studies, just two are senators. A possible explanation is that senators are more beholden to the party because of the list voting system used for the Senate in Australia. This requires prospective senators to curry favour with the party leadership to gain a high position on the list; party “machines” often reward loyal staffers and administrators (in the case of the ALP, notably union officials) with senate “postings”. Thus, there are no ALP senators to be studied. A review of all the politicians identified in the search (in total 43) showed no ALP senator with any hits. However, in undertaking the research some observations will be made regarding comparisons between the Coalition and the ALP. (Note, also, the comments earlier in Chapter 2 regarding the propensity for the ALP to have fewer mavericks than the LNP.)

Katter, Georgiou and Quick are grouped into one case. They provide a cross section of ALP and Coalition members in the House of Representatives. They also vary in party longevity: Katter quit from his party but remained as an independent; while Georgiou and Quick stayed a party members throughout the study period. (To be accurate, Quick quit the ALP just a few weeks before his retirement from parliament, serving out that time as an independent.) The principal characteristic they share is that they are all long-term backbenchers which makes their study together an interesting exercise. It allows for themes or premises to be developed to explain backbench maverickism despite their widely varying backgrounds.

Joyce and Lightfoot share similar characteristics: they are both Coalition senators and both remained within their respective parties during the study period. Because they are Coalition partners, but from different parties, it is appropriate and interesting to include



them within a single case. It allows the close monitoring and comparing of differences and similarities.

Latham is considered as a separate case because he alone of the mavericks under study moved up the party hierarchy to eventual leadership. His rise, as reported in the media, was spectacular, as was his fall when as leader of the Labor opposition he lost the 2004 general election, then shortly after resigned from parliament altogether. This case study asks the question, can a maverick lead a political party?

The ultimate electoral failure of Mark Latham, has, in the subsequent commentary, largely been attributed to voters perceiving him as “too risky” (Bantick 2004, p. 18; Brent 2005a). If voters are largely risk-averse (and later discussion will argue that they are) it is no surprise that political parties eschew mavericks and that voters do not want them anyway. These detached “median” voters, the argument goes (Tucker 2005), prefer their politicians safe and predictable, and Latham certainly did not fit that bill.

Elections are normally decided by passive voters, not partisans. These punters are given the flattering title of swinging voters. But it is code for not really caring one way or the other. (Megalogenis 2004, p. 30)

The subjects for these case studies are not intended to be a representative “sample” of the maverick population, or necessarily the “most maverick” of the population. There are likely many politicians who fit the definition and could legitimately be studied. The purpose here is to select politicians who are considered mavericks and to see how they behave and respond in a real-life situation; the selection method used helps ensure that outcome, but there is no claim to completeness. That is not considered a negative as the case study is intended to be an intensive enquiry of a single, or in this case several, units where the aim is to shed light on a problem pertaining to a broader class of units (Gerring 2004, p. 341).

### **3.6 Summary**

What the discussion and analysis in this and the previous chapter shows is that, although there may not be a great deal written about the meaning of the phrase “political maverick”, there is consistency in the way the phrase is applied and from its application it is not difficult to discern a clear meaning: political maverick as a phrase is

not used ambiguously, it is not beset with connotations, it does not incite confusion in the reader. Both in general writing and in scholarly use, people know what they mean when they use the term and that the everyday, vernacular meaning is valid: a political maverick is an unpredictable, independent loner who cannot be relied upon to follow an orthodox or prevailing group norms in pursuing his or her relationships or his or her goals within a group or organisation.

Although the general meaning may not be ambiguous, it proved difficult to establish measurable criteria against which to assess individuals as either being maverick or not. It was determined that a more valid way of identifying mavericks as units of study for the research was to see which politicians were described as mavericks, and to use the frequency of that description to identify the individuals for the study.

This logic led to the “top six” political mavericks being selected to be the units of analysis. To aid and guide data collection and analysis, the mavericks have been grouped into three cases: the “House”, the “Senate” and the “Leader”. These cases cover a mix of mavericks from both parties and from both houses of parliament.

Nevertheless, as the discussions in Chapter 2 showed, although it may be difficult to measure evaluation criteria, it is possible to describe a maverick and be able to identify one in the case studies. First, a party maverick will be unpredictable and volatile, often railing against party positions. Second, the maverick will own and hold an issue agenda often separate to or at odds with official party policy. Third, the maverick will regularly be at loggerheads with the party at an organisation level, arguing with the hierarchy and breaking the rules. Fourth, the party maverick will be known as a “conviction politician”, one who speaks his or her mind and holds unwavering views. Last, party maverick will use the media spotlight more effectively than the party and tend to occupy a “celebrity” status with the media and the voters.

The multiple case study approach has its complexities. It produces large amounts of data for analysis, although an advantage is its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations. To make sense of these data, a design framework outlined above guides the research to present the findings in a consistent way across each of the cases. The case reports following relate directly to everyday experience and will hopefully

facilitate an understanding of the complex real-life situations in which maverick politicians function. On this foundation the reports can proceed.

The existence of maverick politicians within contemporary Australian political parties – and they do exist – presents something of a paradox: the political processes and systems are so heavily stacked against maverick behaviour that, really, there should be none at all. Most politicians stick steadfastly to the party line (except, as Trollope observed, for an occasional “burst of human nature”). Finding out why mavericks do exist, how or why they succeed and fail, and how they influence politics in Australia, it will be argued here are interesting questions worth an answer.

## 4 The House: Harry Quick, Bob Katter and Petro Georgiou

### 4.1 Background

These three federal lower house members together make an interesting study. There are more differences than similarities between them, but nonetheless it is their common ground that makes the study of their differences the more intriguing. It is important to note, in beginning, that this discussion does not delve into any great detail into the three men's personal life or political achievements. The purpose here is to give as much contextual background that is needed, and to concentrate on matters in their lives that have a bearing on the specific research propositions under review.

**Common ground.** The first of their shared characteristics is in their age and gender: three white, late middle-aged males who could be loosely described as “early baby boomers.” Quick is the oldest, born in 1941, who, although not a post-war baby, nevertheless belongs to that group of Australians who grew up in the 1950s and made their careers in the boom years of the sixties and into the seventies. Katter was born in 1945 and Georgiou in 1947, which puts them firmly into the early baby-boomer demographic.

A second mutual attribute is a reasonably humble, but not poor, middle-class beginning to life. Quick was born in Melbourne and educated in Victoria and South Australia. His father was a World War I veteran who came back from Gallipoli as an invalid at age 19. Harry Quick moved to Tasmania as a young man in 1963, enrolling as a trainee teacher. In 1966, while still bonded to the education department, he and his brother migrated to British Columbia in Canada where they worked for two years as gangers and fettlers on the railways. In 1968 he returned to Tasmania to resume his career as a teacher.

Petro Georgiou was born in Corfu, Greece, and emigrated from war-torn Europe to Australia with his parents when he was a baby. The family settled in Melbourne's Carlton and his father worked in two jobs to make ends meet. He was educated through the state school system, then took a BA at Melbourne University, including an honours year. His first job on graduating in the early 1970s was as a tutor in politics at La Trobe University.

When Bob Katter was born in 1945 his returned serviceman father (also Bob) was running a cinema business in Cloncurry in rural Queensland and was also a member of the local shire council. Katter's schooling was as a boarder at the Mount Carmel Christian Brothers School and the Columba Catholic College at Charters Towers, and on leaving in 1962 at the age of 17, began work locally as a labourer and at the clothing store his father was by then running. Katter senior contested and won the federal seat of Kennedy in 1964, and not long after Katter junior won a scholarship to Queensland University, but came back to Cloncurry before completing fourth year law. He toyed with odd jobs, counting trees and working in a lead smelter (Balogh 2002) before, according to one report (Martens 2008), turning a failing insurance and superannuation business into a thriving enterprise, running a cattle station of more than 250,000 acres, and co-founding and developed a copper mine.

It is not difficult, and perhaps only a little romantic, to picture the young Quick, Georgiou and Katter, twenty or so years after the end of the War, as emblematic young, middle class men of their generation, as archetypal baby-boomers entering adulthood – the student teacher, the educated migrant, and the budding bush entrepreneur – poised to take advantage of the opportunities that the “lucky country” presented in those post-war boom decades.

They did strike out into very different, but useful and fulfilling careers, and it would be another quarter of a century before a line could be drawn again to compare their lives and make a third claim to common ground: almost parallel federal political careers. Katter and Quick both entered parliament at the 1993 general election [Paul Keating's “sweetest victory of all” (Keating 1993)], Georgiou at a by-election a year later, and all three retained their seats at every election through to 2007. At that election Harry Quick retired, while Katter and Georgiou contested and won. Georgiou retired at the 2010 election, although Katter contested and won, and now is one of five members who hold the balance of power. He has not publicly revealed any retirement plans.

**Pre-parliamentary careers.** At the time the three became members of the House of Representatives they were all well into middle-age: Katter 48, Georgiou 47 and Quick 52. It is that twenty five years or so, from the late sixties-early seventies when they finished their schooling until the early nineties when they entered federal parliament,

that defined each of them and marked them as the mavericks they would become as politicians.

Harry Quick taught at various schools around Tasmania, mostly in welfare-dependent suburbs and regional towns. "My penalty for having emigrated while bonded was being posted to a different school every year for six years," he said later (in Montgomery 2002). It is these experiences as a teacher in under-privileged schools which appear to have influenced an interest in the Labor Party's centre-left faction, as a way of furthering a social justice cause. He appeared to take a close interest in his students' welfare and attitude to life: "As a teacher for 23 years, working in disadvantaged schools, I was always on about kids resolving issues rather than settling them by force" (Quick 2002). He also had a stint as an education officer in Hobart's Risdon Gaol. While still teaching, he joined the ALP in 1984 and ran the branch at Glenorchy in Hobart's working class northern suburbs.

In 1988 he ended his teaching career by joining the staff of Labor senator Michael Tate (who had been returned in the double-dissolution election of 1987) then Minister for Justice and a fellow member of the centre-left. A crucial decision the pair made was to move Tate's electorate office into the heart of the broad-acre housing suburb of Bridgewater. An "opportunity for me to put my Labor policy into practice," Quick (1993) declared later. When he entered parliament, Quick placed his own electoral office in Bridgewater, continuing on from where he left off with Tate.

During Quick's time on Tate's staff the two developed a strategy for Quick to win the federal House of Representative seat of Franklin from the Liberals, which had been held by Bruce Goodluck since 1976. They knew that Goodluck, who enjoyed a huge personal following, had the seat for as long as he wanted it, so it was a matter of being ready when Goodluck retired. It has often since been remarked that Goodluck and Quick were alike, even though they are from across the party political divide. According to one journalist, Quick was "following a maverick tradition ... of long-serving Liberal member Bruce Goodluck who had a reputation as a maverick" (ABC-TV 2005b).

It is true that Quick admired the way that Goodluck was seen to fight for Franklin, often at the expense of the party line. In his inaugural speech, Quick (1993) acknowledged

Goodluck's contribution to the electorate, opining that Goodluck's "personal brand of liberalism was far better than that put forward by the Liberal Party." The single event which most Australians would remember Bruce Goodluck for was him infamously wearing a chicken suit to parliament – a maverick indeed.

By basing himself in a welfare housing suburb, Quick was "in the right spot to harness the bipartisan, working-class vote" (Montgomery 2002) as he used his time as an electoral officer to establish his credentials with the voters. It would not be correct to say that Quick modelled himself on Goodluck (who, for instance, ran his office from middle class Lindisfarne), but they did share a similar attitude to their constituents, and Quick knew that he had to capture Goodluck's high personal support to win the seat. Both, to a large extent, ran their electoral offices as a welfare service, almost as an outpost of the government's social service departments.

Both were renowned for their knowledge of and contacts within the welfare sector, evidenced by other politicians, and often community and local government agencies, referring clients to Goodluck or Quick, such were their reputations for getting a positive result. Goodluck retired at the 1993 general election, and Quick saw his chance: he stood for the Labor party and defeated the Liberal's replacement candidate easily. By the time Quick retired in 2007, it meant that for over thirty years Franklin had had only two representatives – Goodluck or Quick.

Nothing could be more removed from Harry Quick's life working in the housing estates of Bridgewater than the circles in which Petro Georgiou moved in Melbourne. Through the early seventies, while Quick was breaking up playground fights, Georgiou was teaching politics at the gentler campus of La Trobe University, before going on in 1975 to work as a senior advisor to the new Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Fraser had just defeated Gough Whitlam in a general election landslide and it must have been an exciting experience for a young man to be called in to work for a new government in nothing less than the lofty environs of Prime Minister's office.

Georgiou's role was to advise Fraser on multiculturalism and immigration, a broad policy area in which Fraser later declared he had a high personal interest. In a newspaper interview in 2007 Fraser "rattled off a long list of decisions," including opposition to apartheid, multiculturalism, accepting Vietnamese refugees and

Aboriginal land rights as “causes he has supported over the years” (in Steketee 2007). It is clear from the support that Fraser would later give to Georgiou in his pre-selection battles with the Liberal Party that the two men formed a strong relationship and that Fraser was a valuable mentor to the younger man in those early years.

Georgiou was, it seems apparent, something of a Liberal prodigy. In 1979 the government set up the Ethnic Television Review Panel and Fraser appointed Georgiou its secretary. The panel almost immediately recommended a permanent television service to promote the concept of multiculturalism, and in 1980 Channel 0/28, later to be called SBS TV, began broadcasting. Petro Georgiou’s star had risen. At about the same time, Fraser introduced legislation into parliament to establish the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs to raise awareness of cultural diversity and promote social cohesion, understanding and tolerance. Georgiou became its founding director.

The electoral cycle caught up with Malcolm Fraser and his government was defeated by Bob Hawke’s Labor in 1983. Hawke abolished the AIMA in 1986 and moved its functions into a new Office of Multicultural Affairs within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Knowing that there would be no place for a Fraser appointee under Hawke, Georgiou left to become a senior advisor to Fraser’s replacement, Andrew Peacock, the new leader of the opposition.

Peacock, a Victorian representing the blue-ribbon seat of Kooyong, also recognised talent in Georgiou and within a short time saw him appointed director of the Liberal Policy Unit, a party rather than parliamentary staff appointment. In 1989 he was promoted to state director of the Victorian division of the Liberal Party. Here he provided key campaign and strategic support to Jeff Kennett, who became Victorian state premier in 1992. Kennett as premier and Georgiou as director presided over the reconstruction of Victoria’s collapsed economy in Kennett’s first term. Georgiou retained this position until he won Kooyong in a by-election after Peacock retired from parliament in 1994.

Although Georgiou’s pre-parliamentary work life was markedly different from Harry Quick’s, it would be a mistake to assume him a compliant “silvertail” who rode into a safe seat on political patronage alone. True, he had enjoyed very privileged relationships with successive Liberal Party leaders, and true, Kooyong was considered a



Liberal seat “by right” having been previously held not only by Peacock, but by the formidable ex-Prime Minister and Party founder, Robert Menzies, and by a High Court Chief Justice, John Latham. Georgiou did not have to wrest his seat from the other side as Quick had to.

But Georgiou’s commitment to ideals and to doing things “his own way” had been well established, and it was never evident, to those that knew him, that he would quietly take his seat and toe the party line in gratitude. For a start, Georgiou’s Greek ethnicity and state schooling meant he was not part of the Melbourne’s private school-educated, elite that tended to dominate the Liberal Party organisation. Georgiou may have owed his initial nomination for the seat to the influence of Fraser and Peacock, but it is a fact that he had to fight the party establishment hard for pre-selection at every subsequent election. For instance, in 2006 a newspaper item, looking back on Georgiou’s parliamentary career, observed:

In many respects, it’s not hard to see why Petro Georgiou has, over the past 12 years, managed to get up the noses of some Liberal Party members in his seat of Kooyong. Although politics has been his vocation, Georgiou does not, could not and would not conform to any political stereotype. (Carney 2006)

There is little doubt that Georgiou’s interest in issues such as refugee and migrant affairs were long held prior to his entry into parliament. One journalist speculated that his passion for the plight of refugees came from his migrant parents and “his childhood experiences, where, as a six-year-old, he refused to answer to the name Peter George, the Anglicised name his teachers tried to give him” (Gordon 2005). Petro Georgiou is clearly stubborn.

And so is Bob Katter. Katter, like Quick and Georgiou spent his twenties casting around various careers, and also like them used this period to explore the world of politics. Whereas Quick joined the ALP and Georgiou went to work for the Liberals, Katter had the National Party (at that time called the Country Party) already in his blood. His father was involved in politics since he was invalided from the army in 1942. At various times a local councillor, a union official, a member of the ALP and a state candidate for the Liberal Party, Katter senior was finally elected to the federal seat of Kennedy for the Country Party in 1966, which he held until his death in 1990.

Katter junior was therefore immersed in politics throughout his school life and early work life. He was a member of (the predecessor to) the Queensland Young Nationals from 1968 to 1973, so an early entry into a political career was no surprise. In 1974 he was elected to the Queensland state parliament in the seat of Flinders for the Country Party, which he held until he retired from state politics in 1992. For sixteen years, from 1974 until 1990, both father and son were Country/National Party politicians, Bob senior in federal parliament and Bob junior in state.

While in state parliament, Katter held several ministries: Northern Development and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs 1983-87; Northern Development, Community Services and Ethnic Affairs 1987-89; and Community Services and Ethnic Affairs, Mines and Energy, and Northern and Regional Development in 1989. He strongly supported his premier, the right-wing, polarising Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Under Bjelke-Petersen the Country Party led a fiercely parochial, now generally regarded as corrupt, government (Dempster 2005) with “almost total disregard of Parliament, the bureaucracy and convention”:

Queensland had become a hothouse for wrongdoing, a place where malfeasance festered, because power was absolute. ALP infighting and incompetence, a unicameral and cowering parliamentary system, a politicised police force and public service, and heavily skewed electoral boundaries conspired, under Sir Joh's patronage, to annul what checks there might otherwise be on the excesses of power. (SMH-Editorial 2005)

After Bjelke-Petersen resigned in December 1987 [in the wake of media revelations over police corruption that preceded the Fitzgerald Royal Commission (1989)], Katter remained in favour with Bjelke-Petersen's successor, Mike Ahern, retaining his position in cabinet. The Nationals lost office in 1989 with a landslide to Labor's Wayne Goss, although Katter retained his seat, meaning he spent the rest of his time in state parliament in opposition.

Through his career in state politics, Katter gained a reputation as an often colourful, but always highly emotional, defender of “ordinary” country people and country “lifestyles”. In his maiden speech in federal parliament in 1993 he launched a passionate plea for rural Queensland then suffering from a drought and rationalisation in many industries, including mining and forestry. Katter used his speech to record

some recent visits to rural communities, cataloguing a litany of broken families, bankruptcies and suicide. He concluded with the following:

I would ask the leadership of the (Keating Labor) Government, because they are the Government of Australia, they are responsible for our country, when was the last time they sat down and listened to a mob of blokes in a packing shed or in a crib room in a factory or in a pub, where they sat there for an hour and shut their mouth and listened and tried to hear some of the human pain and misery and suffering that was occurring out there and tried desperately to try and find out why it was there. (Katter 1993)

Katter, no doubt influenced by his father's history of mixed political allegiances, was always an uncomfortable fit with the National Party. Bjelke-Petersen's "old Country Party" brand of agrarian socialism mixed with social conservatism were closer to his values. In many ways, Katter retained elements of Labor's political views from the 1950s, including opposition to privatisation and economic deregulation, key planks of the Liberal and National Parties in Coalition. He was always going to rail against those.

When he transferred to federal politics, he found himself increasingly out of sympathy with the federal Liberal and National parties on economic and social issues. His views were similar to those espoused by Pauline Hanson and her party, One Nation, although he rejected suggestions that he would join the party (Balogh 2002). In 2001 Katter resigned from the National Party and easily retained his seat as an independent at the general elections of 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010, each time ending up with almost 70 percent of the vote after preferences were distributed.

**Summary.** The purpose here has been to introduce the three case study subjects and to give some background to their lives before and as they entered parliament in the early 1990s. It reveals three men around 50 years old, certainly not fresh-faced or politically naïve, already advanced and hard-bitten in their various careers, and all demonstrating a deep interest in politics, albeit across the spectrum of Australian political beliefs. In short, all three had cut their political teeth long before entering federal parliament: Quick in the rough-and-tumble of blue-collar Labor branch politics; Georgiou at the top of the Liberal's privileged, organisational tree; and Katter in the socially conservative, rural, "deep north" Queensland state parliament. And each came to Canberra with a demonstrated passion for the interests of three often marginalised, segments of the

Australian community: for Quick it was the urban poor; for Georgiou the migrants and refugees; and for Katter disenfranchised rural communities. But to say that they were interested in these social sub-sets alone, would be to underestimate and misinterpret all three.

Consequently, Harry Quick, Petro Georgiou and Bob Katter arrived in Canberra with reputations for maverick behaviour preceding them. They were not political novices, and their mature age and life experiences meant they were not to be over-awed by their new surroundings, or by their party machines. Given their lives to that point, it is difficult to imagine that they would meekly toe the party line if it was at odds to their beliefs.

## 4.2 Research Question 1

*Are Mavericks electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents?*

**The issue agenda.** A first test for this research question is to see if the maverick is better at claiming the “issue agenda” than the non-maverick. It was early suggested that, although voters generally do not know much about politics or policy detail – what Popkin (1994) calls “low information rationality” – they nonetheless, in Australia at least, put some value on their vote and take an interest in election outcomes. This view implies that voters do not logically and empirically weigh up the pros and cons of a policy or argument, but rather make choices in a diffused fashion and not in terms of a set of specific alternatives (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989, p. 94). Rosenblum (2009), writing in the American context, finds that voters, particularly those without a strong party identification, tend to be less interested in politics, less informed about the issues, and less likely to participate in the political process than their partisan fellow citizens. By virtue of their lack of political identity she sees them as “weightless” and “atomized,” happy to leave issue agenda-setting to others.

If voters – or at least an indeterminate mass of swing and disinterested voters – really are not rational in their decision making it means that, for the politician, framing policies is a “game of impression management” (Louw 2005, p.16) as candidates and parties compete to “own” the issues that matter most to voters. Under this view, voters behave in an irrational and selective manner, which means that a candidate’s campaign

of issue ownership is an exercise in marketing as much as anything else (Petrocik 1996, p. 827). This infers that voters want important problems “fixed” and that candidates and parties compete amongst each other to be the best “fixer” (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Krosnick and Kinder 1990), often appealing to emotions in order to own the issues that matter (MacDonald et al. 1991). Therefore, under this interpretation of the “campaign effect” – a positive alignment of the voters’ problem concerns with a candidate’s campaign message, and *vice versa* – “issues” and “problems” are indistinguishable in the voters’ minds (Petrocik 1996, p. 826).

Petrocik (1996) conducted seminal research into the phenomenon of issue ownership during campaigning. The principal hypotheses he tested were that issues are specific to candidates, and that voters will support the candidate (or party) with the perceived best reputation for handling the issues about which the voter is concerned. For each American presidential election between 1960 and 1992, Petrocik analysed news reports and voter surveys of important problems using regression analysis against voting outcomes. He also wrote up a detailed case study on the 1980 presidential election. He found that candidates do have distinctive patterns of problem emphasis in their campaigns and that election outcomes do follow the problem concerns of voters. The individual voter, Petrocik concluded, is significantly influenced by these problem concerns above and beyond the effects of the standard predictors such as predisposed party identification and economic variables (1996, p. 825). Building on the work of Petrocik and others, van der Brug (2004, p. 209) asserts that the issue ownership model is compatible with the (previously discussed here in Chapter 2) ignorant voter as conceptualised by Downs (1957), providing a good explanation of the behaviour of voters.

**Testing the campaign effect.** Replicating Petrocik’s methodology for the campaigns conducted by the subject mavericks would form a useful test to help assess the propositions under review here. However, constrained by the limitations of the thesis, this was not possible. First, Petrocik had access to readily available data that was consistent and comparable between a series of elections. For the electorates under review here, it is not possible to undertake the detailed analysis of the media and voter opinion in the same way. News reports and voter surveys are much more accessible for the US presidential campaign than for individual seat campaigns at Australian

elections. Petrocik had available consistent survey data from each election he reviewed, whereas voter surveys at Australian elections are rarely conducted at the divisional level, at least not consistently or in comparable formats. Where data does exist here, they are contained in local and regional media which are not centrally archived and in all three subject electorates there are not complete or contiguous records. Integral to Petrocik's data sets were voter opinion polls which, in Australia, are not available at electorate level.

There is a further constraint in applying Petrocik's methodology: Petrocik's study did not, to any great extent, distinguish the party from the candidate; he was testing USA presidential elections where the issue-owning reputations of the parties are as important as, and in the campaign runs alongside, the issue owning reputations of the candidates; Petrocik tests the parties as much as he is tests the individual, whereas here the concern is more the candidate *against* the party.

Nevertheless, it is possible and appropriate to use Petrocik's theoretical framework to make some observations on the campaigning of the three subject mavericks. Because of the limitations outlined above, this cannot be an formal test, but rather a case study within a case study to see if there are valid applications of Petrocik's campaign effect theories to the mavericks under review. This research question relies on the mavericks being more aligned with the issues important to their constituents than the major party candidates, and often the maverick's formal party position. If that is true, then it is likely that, at the ballot box (a) voters know more about maverick policies than party policies, and (b) mavericks are seen as better at "owning" and "fixing" issues important to constituents.

Petrocik found three general expectations were supported by an issue ownership interpretation of an election. First, voters perceive differences between the candidates in their ability to handle different types of problems; second, candidates emphasise some problems and not others in a systematic way to their advantage; and third, concerns with a "problem" or issue have an affect on a vote, separate from a voter's partisanship and ideological orientation (Petrocik 1996, p. 831). Petrocik's research findings are not directly analogous to this research question, but there are essentially testing the same thing and a degree of fit is evident.

The table in Figure 4.1 aligns the two frameworks and provides an explanation of fit. The discussion following gives a brief narrative of the political “style” of each subject, and attempts to draw some relationship between their political behaviour and the propositions under review here, in the context of Petrocik’s framework.

Research Question 1	Petrocik’s findings	Comment on fit
<i>Are Mavericks electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents?</i>	<p>Voters perceive differences between the candidates in their ability to handle different types of problems.</p> <p>Candidates emphasise some problems and not others in a systematic way to their advantage.</p> <p>Concerns with a “problem” or issue have an affect on a vote, separate from a voter’s partisanship and ideological orientation.</p>	<p>For voters to know the maverick “message” they need to be able to differentiate it from other candidates’ messages.</p> <p>Petrocik’s conclusion that candidates emphasise problems systematically is consistent with mavericks aligning their problem solving agenda with the concerns of the voter.</p> <p>Petrocik found that where a party is perceived to have a “performance problem” with an issue, the alternative candidate strives to be more believable on that issue.</p>

Figure 4.1 Best fit of Petrocik’s issue ownership theory to Research Question 1

**Harry Quick.** Harry Quick has a history in his political behaviour of being, as one journalist puts it with more than a hint of understatement, “slightly unusual” (Raabus 2007). As mentioned previously, Franklin was held for the Liberals by Bruce Goodluck from 1975 to 1993, when Quick won it for Labor upon Goodluck’s retirement. Just as Goodluck’s maverick ways were seen to have helped keep the seat in Liberal hands, so was Quick’s proclivity for currying favour with the voters recognised as a major factor in Labor’s success in Franklin at five successive elections (Bowe 2007). Quick

maintained his Labor endorsement at elections in 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001 and 2004 despite being factionally unaligned (apart from earlier Centre Left involvement when he was a staffer to Senator Michael Tate).

As stated, it is not possible to know empirically, from elector polls, whether voters knew more of Quick's policies and messages than other candidates or parties. However, it can be inferred from Quick's campaign and electorate behaviour that he aligned his policy positions with the electors of Franklin, that they knew it, and rewarded him at the ballot box. This can be illustrated by comparing Quick's electoral performance with that of the party. If he did relatively better than the ALP's average it may indicate that his messages and issue ownership agenda were aligned more closely with Franklin voters than his party's. The logic is that, if Quick was merely a conduit for the party line, then his vote would move closely with the party's. Figure 4.2 shows the change in primary vote percentage from one election to the next for elections held 1993 to 2007, comparing Labor's return in Franklin to the ALP national average. Quick won from 1993 to 2004, then retired at the 2007 election.

<i>Election</i>	<i>Franklin</i>	<i>National ALP</i>	<i>Franklin compared to national ALP</i>
1993	+10.3	+5.5	+4.8
1996	-3.2	-6.2	+3.0
1998	+3.2	+1.3	+1.9
2001	-3.3	-2.3	-1.0
2004	+6	-0.3	+9
2007	-5.0	+5.8	-10.8

Figure 4.2 Franklin – Change in primary vote percentage between elections

It can be seen that Quick out-performed his party in four out of the five elections he contested. His ability to increase the vote, or lessen the loss, against the party's trend subsided as his career progressed, but that would be expected because gains become harder to achieve once a margin is established. In 2007 when Quick did not contest, the Labor vote collapsed.

Maverickism, it is readily conceded, is not the only plausible explanation for a candidate's vote to out-perform the party's. Incumbency in general, as Jackman (2005)



concludes, is an advantage. Jackman also identified a considerable “retirement slump” across the country particularly for ALP members, providing one explanation for the reversal in Labor’s performance in Franklin in 2007. However, on this last point, Jackman (2005, p. 15) found the average “retirement slump” against Labor on a two-party preferred basis to be a 2.2 percent; the Franklin two-party preferred swing in 2007 was 3.1 percent which suggest that at least a proportion of the Franklin ALP vote resided more in Quick personally than incumbency alone would imbue.

The purpose here is to find evidence that support the view that voters knew Quick’s policy positions and that those positions reflected voters’ issues. The conclusion is that Harry Quick did do better electorally than his party and that was likely due to his ability to align himself with his voters’ problems. This position is further supported by the pattern of elector support and candidate behaviour in Franklin; the fact that Franklin voters switched with apparent ease across the political divide, from long-time Liberal voters to long-time Labor voters, indicates they identified more readily with a candidate message than a party message.

To put the argument in terms of Petrocik’s issue ownership explanation of candidate behaviour, it appears that Franklin voters were able to differentiate Quick’s message from that of the party. Certainly, by his behaviour and public statements, Harry Quick emphasised his credentials as a blue-collar “battler” and was seen as believable on those issues. For the voters of Franklin, Quick was a high-profile and well known member. His strategy, from the start of his candidature, to establish his electoral office in the heart of the broad-acre social housing estates of Bridgewater meant that he was highly visible and approachable to the “ordinary” voter.

That mavericks are seen as the better “fixer” of important issues goes hand-in-hand with voter knowledge of the maverick’s issue agenda. Harry Quick was not in a position of power within the party, so his “fixing ability” was not in terms of influencing political decisions; rather, it was through the establishment of his electoral office as a social service centre to attract the highest amount of contact with voters as possible, which allowed him to not only maximise his visibility, but also to focus on the problem concerns of his constituents. In an interview at the end of his parliamentary career, he said of the decision to work from Bridgewater:

The office was a haven for people who were disposed and had no voice in society and that the office and I had done lots of wonderful things, found people jobs and houses and stopped kids from sniffing petrol and being there for people ... (Quick 2006)

This ability to align the problem concerns of his voters with his policy and message positions does set Quick apart and lends support to the research question under review here. Quick saw a campaign advantage in developing what he believed was a special relationship with the electors of Franklin to convince them that he was more believable than his party on issues important to them and, by continually winning elections, as a shield to keep the party warriors at bay. His response to criticism of his quixotic ways has always been that it is a simple question of loyalty and that his lies with the people of Franklin, not his fellow party members of the ALP. His antipathy towards and disdain of the party, particularly the “union hacks”, grew as his time in parliament grew. This aspect of Quick’s candidacy is further developed later in this study.

**Petro Georgiou.** Drawing conclusions about the extent of Petro Georgiou’s connection with his electorate do not come as readily as they did for Quick because Kooyong is a vastly different seat to Franklin. Figure 4.3 shows the change in Georgiou’s primary vote compared with the Coalition’s average over his time in parliament. Whereas for Quick this test showed he consistently performed better than his party, for Georgiou the results are mixed: for two election he did substantially better than his party, but for three elections substantially worse. (The 1994 by-election is omitted because it is not possible to make national comparisons.)

<i>Election</i>	<i>Kooyong</i>	<i>National LNP</i>	<i>Kooyong compared to national LNP</i>
1996	-3.3	+3.0	-6.3
1998	-2.2	-7.6	+3.4
2001	+3	+3.2	-2.9
2004	-.4	+4.1	-3.7
2007	+5	-4.6	+5.1

Figure 4.3 Kooyong – Change in primary vote percentage between elections

Kooyong has one of the country's highest levels of median family income and highest proportions of people in professional occupations. It also has, compared to the national average, a high level of families with dependent children, but a much lower rate of mortgages. Kooyong is an electorate of affluent, home-owning, upper middle-class families. It is a safe conservative seat, habitually held by double-digit margins, whereas Franklin has always been hard-fought. Kooyong is a traditional "leadership seat" for the conservative parties and has, since Federation, never come close to electing a Labor candidate; Franklin has had only backbenchers from either party, at least for the past thirty years.

Quick had to work hard to build his margin into the six and seven percent range, while Georgiou never had to worry with his double-digit bolster. Georgiou's two-party preferred margin declined at each of his six elections wins, from 14.0 percent at the 1994 by-election that first bought him into parliament down to 9.5 percent by 2007: perhaps not an indication of plummeting support, but hardly to be expected if the member was in touch with his voters' problem concerns.

It is therefore tempting to conclude, as many of his critics do (Henderson 2006a), that Petro Georgiou took his electoral cushion for granted and used it to promote his personal causes at the expense of his electorate and party. Over asylum seeker laws (discussed later in this chapter) colleagues in marginal seats accused him of "undermining the Coalition's prospects" at the ballot box (Dodson and Coorey 2006). To Georgiou's detractors he was an under-achiever because he held the "jewel" in the Victorian Liberal crown, never became a minister and forever challenged government decisions in the party room, and in public (Gordon 2008b).

That, however, is too simplistic a view and perhaps not an accurate one. Since the mid-1990s Kooyong has shown the same slow drift to Labor as other wealthy urban seats, the so-called "doctors' wives" effect. The term doctors' wives was first used in the run-up to the 2004 election (Grattan 2004c) when the nation's wealthiest postcodes in Sydney and Melbourne began turning against the LNP Coalition on non-economic issues such as the war in Iraq, asylum-seekers and forests. These voters are not literally doctors' wives but a range of people on the top of the income ladder who moved to

support small “l” Liberal candidates, like Georgiou. So Georgiou's victories as the champion of small “l” liberalism arguably represented a repudiation of Howard’s and (foreign affairs minister) Downer’s hard line on immigration and a win for the so-called doctors' wives within the Liberal Party.

An analysis of the elections from 1996 to 2004 (Megalogenis 2007) lends support to the doctors’ wives effect and suggests something deeper at play, predating Australia's involvement in the Iraq invasion of 2003, or the Tampa issue of 2001. The Liberals have been losing support since 1996 in electorates, such as Kooyong, that display the reinforcing character traits of privilege: an above-average proportion of voters with tertiary degrees, who work as professionals, and who are not stretched on mortgages (Megalogenis 2007). In 11 blue-ribbon Liberal seats spread across Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, the government's vote was substantially lower at the 2007 election than it was when Howard took power in 1996.

In fact it could be argued that Georgiou’s presence in Kooyong helped mitigate the doctors’ wives problem because his views, rather than the John Howard party line, are aligned more closely to theirs. This appears to have been the case at the 2007 election, where Liberal Party strategists feared Georgiou’s advocacy of refugee issues would lose him the seat (Bachelard 2007). At the 2010 election (which Georgiou did not contest) there was some recovery of the conservative vote in some of the subject seats, but that must be seen in the context of a swing to the coalition of 3.2 percent nationally, and 4.8 percent in NSW (where many of the seats are located). Figure 4.4 shows how Georgiou performed in Kooyong compared to the other Liberal blue ribbon seats considered by Megalogenis in his study. It can be seen that Petro Georgiou did comparatively well.

<b>Seat</b>	<b><i>Liberal vote % (2pp) 1996</i></b>	<b><i>Liberal vote % (2pp) 2007</i></b>	<b><i>Move since 1996</i></b>	<b><i>Liberal vote % (2pp) 2010</i></b>	<b><i>Move since 1996</i></b>
Ryan	66.9	53.8	- 13.1	57.4	-9.5
Bradfield	75.8	63.4	- 12.4	63.6	-12.2
Bennelong	60.1	48.6	- 11.5	53.5	-6.6
North Sydney	65.6	55.4	- 10.2	55.5	-10.1
Berowra	68.4	58.9	- 9.5	66.7	-1.7
Sturt	60.0	50.9	- 9.1	53.4	-6.6
Boothby	61.6	52.9	- 8.7	50.1	-11.5
Warringah	65.3	59.5	- 5.8	63.2	-2.1
<b>Kooyong</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>- 4.3</b>	<b>58.4</b>	<b>-5.4</b>
Wentworth	57.8	53.8	- 4.0	64.7	+6.9
Higgins	60.7	57.0	- 3.7	57.4	-3.3
In this analysis electoral boundary changes in some electorates has not been taken into account. These will have some effect in some cases as geographically the electorates in 2007 and 2010 are not exactly the same as 1996. Nevertheless, the demographic characteristics of all these electorates has not changed markedly, so the broad point, that wealthy Australia is drifting to the left remains and is valid.					

Figure 4.4 Change in support – Liberal blue ribbon seats

It is interesting to note that Bennelong, ex-Prime Minister Howard’s electorate, slid much more than Kooyong, to the extent that Howard lost the seat in 2007. Howard was seen by many as reflecting mainstream Australian conservative values, and is an icon of the Liberal Party; from the evidence here, Georgiou’s civil libertarianism appears to have been more in tune with electors’ needs.

In terms of Petrocik’s framework and this study’s propositions it is reasonable to conclude that Georgiou successfully aligned himself with the issues important to the “doctors’ wives” demographic, to the extent that it exists. For example, in 2006 Georgiou supported a private member’s bill to legalise same-sex relationships when it was mooted by fellow-backbencher, Warren Entsch (O'Dwyer 2006). But it is also apparent that his appeal goes further than this group of voters. In the much reported 2006 preselection, seen as a showdown between the party’s moderates and conservatives (AAP 2006b; Cutcliffe 2006; Topsfield and Guerrera 2006), Georgiou,

the moderate, won 62 of the 85 votes at his selection committee (AAP 2006b). As Milne (2006) wrote in a newspaper item at the time:

So Georgiou's victory, as the champion of small-l liberalism, the architect of the Government's softened refugee policy and multiculturalism, represents a repudiation of Howard and Downer; a win for the so-called doctors' wives within the Liberal Party.

Georgiou was popular and well known in the streets of his electorate and during his time in parliament he commanded fierce grass-roots support within the party. He did not set himself up, as Quick did, as a hands-on worker in the community providing a link to social services – but he did not need to. The last thing affluent Kooyong voters required was help in the everyday trials of housing, youth crime or substance abuse; rather, they needed a conscience: a conscience on social justice, civil rights, immigration, same-sex couples and anti-terrorism.

But Georgiou's issue agenda was not exclusively progressive, and he did reflect his affluent electorate's neo-liberal values where they existed elsewhere. For instance, he worked with Jeff Kennett on his privatisation agenda when Kennett was Victorian premier. And he was part of the strategy team in 1994 for federal leader John Hewson's *Fightback* campaign, which featured a GST (Tingle 1994, p. 229). Once in parliament, Georgiou did not dissent from many of the Howard government's signature right-wing policies, such as industrial relations reform, the goods and services tax, or the sale of government-owned assets such as Telstra (West 2006).

The conclusion to draw is that Georgiou was successful at owning the issues important to his constituents. Certainly their level of knowledge of his policy platforms was high because of intense intense publicity his maverick views attracted. Georgiou clearly, it is contended, emphasised "his" issues in a systematic way to his advantage. His relative success against the Liberal Party's tendency over the past decade to bleed votes in affluent suburbs lends support to one of Petrocik's key findings: that there is a campaign effect resident in the candidate that is separate from partisan allegiances. Georgiou allowed his voters to keep their economic conservative values with a Liberal vote while providing an outlet for their conscience on issues of social justice.

**Bob Katter.** One principal factor that differentiates Bob Katter from Harry Quick and Petro Georgiou is that, although he started off in parliament as a member of a political party (the Nationals), he resigned during his tenure to sit as an independent. The difference is important because, although Quick and Georgiou are mavericks often at loggerheads with and despised by elements of their party organisations, there is no indication that the voters of Franklin or Kooyong are about to give up on the two-party system. Neither seat, realistically in the foreseeable future, could be won by anyone other than a candidate from one of the parties. By illustration, there was no talk of an independent candidate (with a realistic chance of winning) standing in Franklin in 2007 when Quick retired (it was won by Labor) and when Georgiou retired at the 2010 election, Kooyong was retained by the Liberals with no loss of margin.

In contrast, Katter has built his success on voter alienation from the major parties; he is one of a number of independents that reflect a belief in parts of regional Australia that the major parties have become disconnected from rural communities through financial and industrial deregulation initiated by the Labor government in the 1980s and continued by the Liberal/National Coalition government in 1990s. The impact on jobs, income and living conditions was compounded by the withdrawal of basic services from rural and regional towns, including banks, airlines, railways and government utilities.

Over this period, as Costar and Curtin (2004, p. 9) argue, traditional political parties largely abandoned their post-war agricultural policies of regulation, subsidies and protection, requiring regional communities to take more responsibility for their own sustainability. For many observers this shift in policy emphasis – or as one independent, Ted Mack, put it, a “scuffle for the middle ground and power” (in Costar and Curtin 2004, p. 18) – by the parties has denied to some parts of rural Australia the economic benefits of an otherwise prosperous country. These changes have created a social, cultural and economic divide, a feeling of the haves and the have-nots, between the city and the country. The Nationals, consequently, have been generally confined to rural and coastal areas, struggling to maintain a hold on the fringes, while the Liberals and the ALP have adapted better to urbanisation (Botteril and Cockfield 2009).

At the 2010 election Katter and two other ex-National Party independents, Rob Oakshot and Tony Windsor, were returned and held the balance of power in a hung parliament.

Katter accused the Nationals of “having done nothing positive for regional Australia despite having had the balance of power for 12 years”(in White 2010). According to Penberthy (2010) these three ex-Nationals could “effectively destroy the National Party”. He argues National Party leader, Warren Truss, was “humiliated” and “sidelined” because it was the independents and not his party that seemingly had influence over government. As another journalist put it, “What's the point of the Nationals if three renegades can secure more for regional Australia in two weeks than the Nats have in the last two decades?” (Keane 2010).

In the earlier discussion of Bob Katter’s life before he entered federal parliament it was shown that he had a long career, eighteen years, as a Country Party member in Queensland’s state parliament, much of it as a minister under Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s premiership. Although Katter was a loyal servant to that government, it has become clear now that his allegiances were and still are to the values of the old Country Party, rather than to the party as it evolved. This is illustrated by him not only being prepared to forsake the National Party, but perhaps also in his upbringing where his father had an eclectic political history: “For decades speculation has endured that Bob Katter Snr flirted with communism in his youth and all but joined the Communist Party. Of course, in later life he was a staunch opponent of the movement” (Griffith 1996).

Katter Senior clearly had difficulty deciding which political party matched his values. According to one of his parliamentary contemporaries, when he was asked why he had never joined the Liberal Party he replied in the “famous words” of Billy Hughes that he had to “draw the line somewhere” (Cohen 2010).

In many ways, Bob Katter Junior’s philosophies of agrarian socialism and protectionism are much closer to his father’s anti-free market, egalitarian values than to the rationalism and pragmatism of the modern major parties. Consequently, Katter left the National Party on 8 July 2001 to run as an independent at that year’s election due to “disenchantment with economic rationality” that he felt the National Party was adopting. The catalyst for Katter quitting, according to Toohey (2010), was when party leader and deputy prime minister John Anderson - “the person Katter perhaps detests more than any other in politics” - supported the Liberals in the deregulation of the sugar and dairy industries. Katter, it seems, hated the Nationals more than John Howard’s Liberals who, as the stronger Coalition force, had the deciding hand. That is “Katter all



over” argues Toohey (2010): “He didn’t agree with the Liberals, but he respected their conviction. What he hated was what he saw as the weak-kneed acquiescence of his Nationals, who should have put a fight.”

I belonged to a party and I was an enthusiastic supporter of the central policy of the party, which was collective bargaining of our agricultural product so we could meet on equal terms the enormous might of Woolworths and Coles. When collective bargaining was deregulated, industry after industry simply collapsed. Within two months of the dairy industry being deregulated, the price to the farmers went down 30 percent. When wool was deregulated, wool prices dropped clean in half. When they announced they were going to deregulate sugar, I decided that it was improper for me to stay in a party whose policies were the complete opposite of what I believe we needed for survival ... I’m not a Queenslander. Never have been. I’m a North Queenslander – we’re entirely different animals. (Katter in Martens 2008)

Katter’s decision to resign from the Nationals received support from many in the grass-roots of the party. Office-bearers within his electorate opposed the National Party standing a candidate against him, and mass resignations from the party were predicted as a show of support. Katter also attracted significant backing from ex-Country/National Party leaders, notably Katter’s mentor, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, and former state government minister Mick Vievers .

Reflecting the grass roots support for Katter, state party officials took two days to decide to expel Katter. The federal leadership refrained from out-right denouncing Katter, despite the political damage that he has done to the government. John Anderson simply declared that he had given up trying to understand him, while Trade Minister Mark Vaile insisted that Katter remained a “mate” (Head 2001). Figure 4.5 illustrates graphically how successful Katter has been as an independent. It shows that his four election wins as an independent all exceed his three as a party candidate.

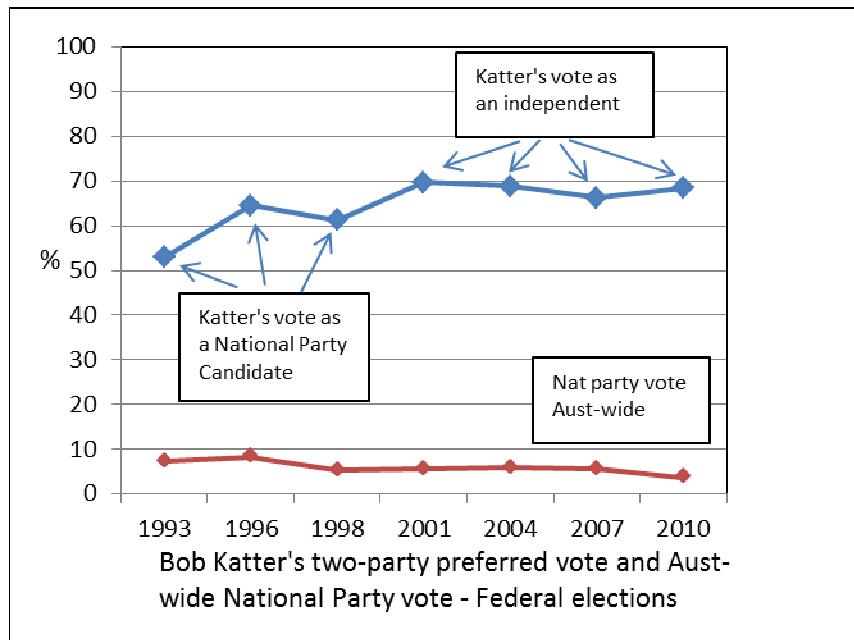


Figure 4.5 Bob Katter's two-candidate preferred vote

The discussion here indicates that Bob Katter's policy agenda is closely matched to his voters'. Just as Petro Georgiou gives his affluent voters "permission" to vote for him by being their social conscience, Katter grants his rural-poor voters permission to abandon their long-held partisan affiliation with the Nationals. Both Katter and his voters are a product of the dislocation of the settled patterns of rural life that they knew from the post-war years, and the feeling for both is that the National Party no longer represents them, it has forgotten them. This is a similar void filled by Pauline Hanson's One Nation in the late 1990s, and by a handful of independents since.

**Summary.** The purpose of this discussion was to test to see if the problem concerns of the voters align with the issues agendas of the mavericks. The logic was that if that was found to be true, then the research question under review here - that mavericks are more successful at owning the important issues - is also likely to be true, in part because they defy the elements of the party platform that are unpopular in their electorate.

Petrocik's (1996) seminal work on issue ownership was used as a framework for the discussion. All three mavericks, it is contended, formed a "special relationship" with their voters, a relationship that allowed them a channel of communication that maximised a campaign advantage.

The mavericks all enjoyed high name recognition in their electorates and their policy platforms and messages were well known – they were all outspoken and controversial and invited media attention to their causes. One aspect that is apparent is that the mavericks are quite specific and focussed in their handling of the issues agenda and in framing policy debates. Harry Quick presented himself as the suburban battler’s friend, always there to help with their day-to-day problems; Petro Georgiou was the conscience of his affluent voters “allowing” them to have an outlet for their concerns on social justice, while retaining their economic conservatism; while Bob Katter champions causes for his “forgotten” constituents presenting as a fighter for rural “values.”

None tried to be all things to all people. Each was well known by his voters, probably instantly known, for his core message, and it is apparent that for each that core message was a good fit with the problem concerns of his constituents – and the constituents knew it. The act of being a maverick *freed* them of having to continually promulgate an often staid and “packaged” party line, allowing them to hone in on their message that their voters were interested in. Therefore, the proposition that mavericks are electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to “fix” the issues important to their constituents is supported.

Each of the mavericks under review here, in effect, gave their voters what they want. The belief in the electorates was that the important issues lie in the candidate and not in the party. To this end, Petrocik’s central thesis exists in these three mavericks: a campaign effect is found because they successfully frame the vote choice as a decision to be made in terms of problems facing their electorates that they are better to “handle” than their party.

### **4.3 Research Question 2**

*Is one explanation for maverick success that the maverick is a more accomplished communicator than the party loyalist - better at “conviction politics” and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of “celebrityhood”?*

**Conviction.** The proposition that mavericks strive to be seen as conviction politicians was derived from a discussion earlier in Chapter 2 of the concept of “trust” in terms of the relationship voters have with their elected member. It was concluded that, insofar as

forming opinions about politicians, voters essentially see trust in two distinct ways: in one context they do not expect their politicians to tell the truth; but in another they prefer candidates who they trust will deliver on what they believe in. There is a paradox here, something different from the normal construct of truth and honesty at play. The proposition to test is that voters rate highly a candidate who is seen as being true to their convictions and can deliver on those convictions.

In the preceding discussion it was established that the three mavericks under review were successful at owning an issue agenda advantageous to them, that this issue agenda was closely aligned to that of their voters, and that voters generally knew and understood the maverick's key messages. Certainly, all three mavericks have been seen to be head-strong, stubborn and outspoken. It might, then, be manifest that these mavericks are considered by their voters to be conviction politicians: it would be difficult to hold an issue agenda without also having conviction in it. Notwithstanding that conviction follows logically from issue ownership, it is a concept worth considering separately here. First to establish that mavericks do indeed strive for that elusive "conviction" mantle and also to examine their motivations in taking the conviction path.

It is apparent from the way the three mavericks have carried themselves in public during their parliamentary careers that they do believe themselves to be conviction politicians. They make frequent claims that their beliefs are important to them and not to be compromised – all three put a self-proclaimed interest in their electorate first and foremost. As one Kennedy local said of Katter:

In the electorate he would be the most popular person. All sides of politics would vote for Bob Katter because what he says is what he'll stand up and fight for until the next election, irrespective of the party machine and that will always keep him there, because he's getting votes from all sides ... (in Costar and Curtin 2004, p. 17)

Similarly, a resident of Kooyong on Georgiou:

Without his drive and determination there would be a lot of women and children sitting in detention centres. He provides the conscience of the party and a strong humanitarian interest in human rights and civil liberties ... He's

from a migrant background and that background gives you a school-of-hard-knocks outlook. You've seen the hard side of life; you haven't got there because you're from a well-heeled family ... I think he's done an excellent job – on mandatory detention, his work on immigration, and in general his liberal attitudes. Small 'l' liberal – he's one of the few genuinely left in the party. (in Topsfield and Guerrera 2006)

And of Harry Quick:

What Harry Quick is is a truth teller. Harry has always called it as he's seen it and he's upset some people along the way by doing that. But I absolutely believe that that is a fundamental prerequisite of a successful member of parliament; someone who's got the courage of their convictions and is prepared to call it as he sees it. (ABC-Radio 2009)

It was earlier argued that the notion of conviction in politics is about being trusted and “believable” on a core issue agenda. True conviction politicians are rare because, in Australia's tightly disciplined two-party system, personally held convictions are often sublimated by the official party message. Or, as Gruen (2005) puts it “... most politicians prefer being ‘small targets’ – minimising the offence they give”. But conviction politicians – mavericks – rise above that to promote policies that they feel are right for pursuing their ideals. They will pursue those policies, even unpopular ones, if they believe it is right, and they will put their position in the party on the line if they have to. They stand up to their party, and as long as they hold their position they will do what they have been elected to do. “If you don't like it throw us out” – is usually the message and they firmly believe they would win the argument with the electorate.

From the evidence presented here it is contended that Quick, Georgiou and Katter fit the definition. Mavericks, as discussed, are not all things to all people; they are not omnibus politicians. They do not try and cover all voter concerns, but use their conviction status to appeal to their core voters' values: “The public crave politicians who stand for something” (Gruen 2005). So maverickism is not general – it is selective on the conviction issues they own and establish as their territory, and being seen as men of conviction is important to them in handling this issue agenda.

In many ways it can be concluded that “maverick politician” and “conviction politician” go together: not all conviction politicians are mavericks, but perhaps all

mavericks are conviction politicians. Mavericks have their place in politics as this thesis hopefully shows, but that is not to say that it is open to all politicians to follow their convictions blindly. As a past leader of the British Labour Party, Neil Kinnock, observed:

... a politician that was all conviction and no consensus was a danger, one that was all consensus and no conviction was a misplaced person, and the important task was to be able to mix conviction and consensus in order to deliver real answers. (Kinnock in Kreisler 1994)

Quick, Georgiou and Katter, it is contended, fit into the “danger” category as ascribed by Kinnock. All three were or are considered dangerous in a party-political sense and all three struggle with any other view other than their own.

**Celebrity.** Street (2004) defines a “celebrity politician” as one who uses the “forms and associations of the celebrity to enhance their image and communicate their message.” Certainly, as internet news sites and the programming on television indicates, there has been a shift away from “hard” news stories and to celebrity or popular culture stories. “Television's intimacy, its use of close-ups and one-to-one conversations, focuses attention on politicians ‘human’ qualities,” is Street’s (2004, p. 440) further assertion. This means that politicians need populist empathy to succeed and therefore, to an extent, must learn the skills of the celebrity.

’t Hart and Tindall (2009, p. 21) argue that the more endemic is public disaffection with “politics as usual”, then the bigger the political space for celebrity politics to take hold. In their view, “Perhaps it is no coincidence that the case of the first ever porn star to be elected into parliament occurred in Italy, where trust in politics is persistently low” (2009, p. 21). A surge of anti-political feeling, according to writers such as ’t Hart and Tindall, has meant that politicians incorporate a no-party politics, or “anti-politics”, persona into their celebrity appeal.

Although the phenomenon of the anti-politician is a popular narrative among current writers, usually explained by an increase in public antipathy towards politics and politicians, those claims are not entirely supported by evidence. It has already been shown here (the discussion in Chapter 2) that Australians hold their democracy in high regard, generally take an interest in politics and approve of political parties.

Further, as Figure 4.6 indicates, three quarters of Australians take an interest in elections and care who wins (McAllister and Clark 2008, p. 4). In fact, on McAllister and Clark's research, the Australian voters' level of satisfaction with democracy, trust in government and interest in elections are all *up* from the levels they were 40 years ago. This is not what to expect if the public is becoming institutionally disillusioned with the state of politics.

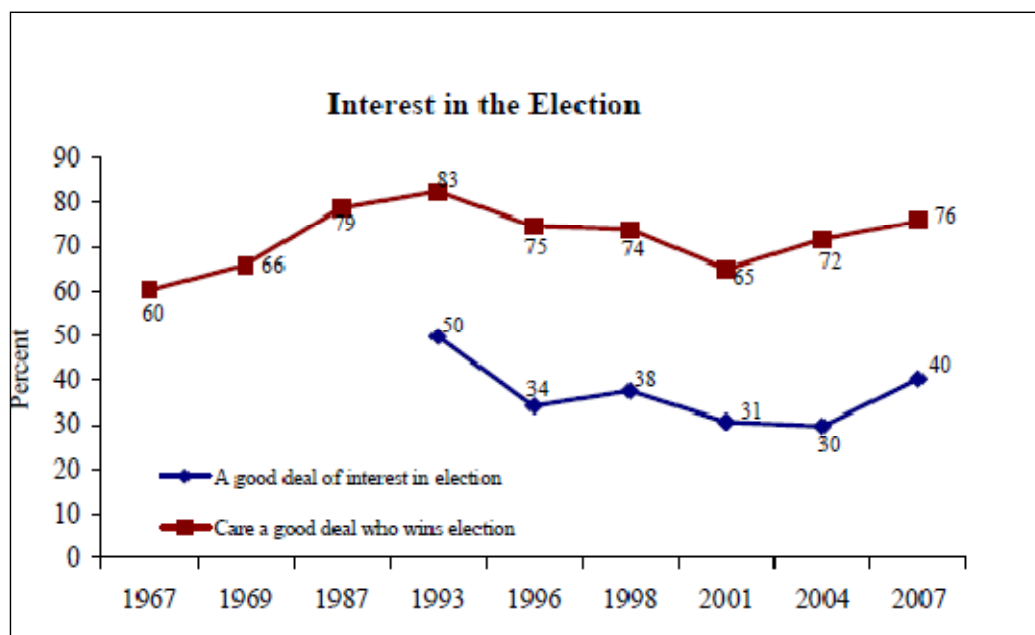


Figure 4.6 Interest in Australian elections

One theme present in this thesis is that Australian voters are cynical of politics and do not invest an inordinate amount of time in it - true, but they have not given up on it either. There is appeal among many writers, a popular discourse, to subscribe to an “anti-politician” account to explain politics moving towards a celebrity culture. Some anti-politician sentiment certainly exists in the community, but, on the evidence, it is not because voters distrust politicians or dislike politics any more than they have in the past; it is rather, as Street (2004) maintains, that celebrity techniques are more a legitimate use of the prevailing and relevant forms of communication: “... if the authentic play of body politics is the most efficacious form of entertaining communication, then 'briefcase politics' with its institutionalised procedures and long-winded arguments might as well bow out now” (Meyer 2002 in Street 2004, p. 440). In

other words, ways of communicating with voters have changed, not the voters themselves.

Therefore, an anti-political persona can have an appeal and a place, particularly amongst mavericks. Keane (2002) asserts that mavericks, such as Ross Perot, Ralph Nader and Pauline Hanson, succeed because they can “claim to champion the interests of the unrepresented, all those who don't identify with politicians.” Thus the standing with the voters of these politicians is lifted by their ability to claim to represent the people. This is exactly what Quick, Georgiou and Katter do. It is precisely because the anti-politician is not the norm in Australia that the three mavericks here use it so effectively.

Bob Katter, to many, is the quintessential anti-politician. By eschewing his party he has become a celebrity figure, where it counts, in his home electorate. Rural electorates such as Kennedy are generally more demanding of their local member in terms of visibility in the community, but that suits a maverick. Katter has turned this small town scrutiny into an advantage. Country media is hungry for local stories and will seek out the sitting member for comments on issues affecting the region and this inevitably means more exposure for Katter, and probably helps explain why rural parliamentarians generally hang onto their seats for longer. As Browne (2008) puts it, “Katter was seen as hard-working and independently minded, a kind of ‘anti-politician’.”

The outcome of the 2010 election, where Katter along with three other independents held the balance of power, gave him the opportunity to become a national celebrity, an opportunity he did not pass by, as Figure 4.7 shows.





Figure 4.7 Front page of Melbourne's Herald Sun 25 August 2010

However, despite Katter's split from the Nationals, he decided to support the Coalition during the balance of power negotiations when his fellow rural and ex-National independents, Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor, sided with Labor. The Queensland media (Madigan and Michael 2010) reported that Coalition members including old National Party enemies were grateful that Katter had decided to stay with the Coalition despite seventeen days of uncertainty about which way he would vote. As one journalist reported:

Katter is extremely well known to Queenslanders, who see a lot of themselves in this cowboy from the far north. He has loopy ideas on some matters, but at heart is his desire for a better deal for the bush and its farmers. (Wilson 2010)

Harry Quick conducted himself on his "home patch" similarly to Bob Katter, but without so much of the values rhetoric. Whereas Katter gains much of his celebrity and anti-political status from championing rural causes on the national stage, Quick's focus was much more local. Nevertheless, within Franklin and southern Tasmania, where his voters live, his sometimes eccentric behaviour and on-going battles with the local Labor

leadership kept him in the news. Because of his tendency to say what he thinks, journalists would always seek him out for a comment hoping, and often succeeding, in getting something controversial and therefore newsworthy.

Petro Georgiou played the anti-politician, and that made him well known and admired by many of his voters. As already alluded to, his notoriety was much broader as he became a national standard-bearer for small “I” Liberal values. All this made him a celebrity too, but a more reluctant one than Katter or Quick. He was not a limelight seeker as such, but his maverick ways and dogged pursuit of his issues ultimately attracted media attention. Because he was one of the few Coalition members to, through the conservative’s four-terms in power, publically challenge the leadership of John Howard, he could not help but gain celebrity-like, even hero-like, status as the “party’s conscience” (Gordon 2008b). Petro Georgiou did not give many media interviews and rarely sought publicity – but he did not need to.

**Summary.** This discussion set out to test if mavericks were regarded as conviction politicians who successfully integrated celebrityhood into their communications. The conclusion is, for these three mavericks, with some qualifications, yes. The qualifications centre around the specifics of their attributes. They are conviction politicians, but their conviction platform is specific to their issue agenda. They are also celebrity politicians, but expressed in terms of their anti-political credentials. It is because they are maverick politicians and conviction politicians, that they are also anti-politicians. Therefore, their success as mavericks is at least partly explained by them being more accomplished communicators than their party loyalist colleagues - better at “conviction politics” and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of “celebrityhood”.

#### **4.4 Research Question 3**

*Are mavericks more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with policy influence and career within the party, or do mavericks have a significant impact on party decision-making and policy formulation?*

The rationale for Question 3 derives from the early research of Vickers (1968), and later of Kingdon (2002). Vickers understood that political problems largely defy systemic analysis. Thus, the inherent messiness of politics mitigates against the “naive belief” that decision-making can be “rational” (Parsons 1995, p. 433), so an approach is

required that better allows for the dynamism of party politics. Vickers accepts that his mechanical metaphor might not be appropriate for a political setting.

... the definition of political problems becomes more difficult as the relations to be regulated become more numerous and involve more diverse conventional views. The more the analysis of the situation, the more complex it is found to be; and this complexity consists in the variety of inconsistent values which call for optimizing or at least satisficing. (Vickers 1968, p. 85)

Kingdon hypothesised that decision-making in government is dynamic and unpredictable. He asked how issues get to be issues that governments make decisions on, how governments choose between alternatives, and how the policy agenda is set: “How does an idea’s time come?” (2002, p. 2).

This question, thus, considers the maverick’s relationship with the party and how the maverick influences ideas within the party. Earlier, research undertaken by Kam of Westminster parliaments in four countries was discussed (Kam 2002). His starting point was that the chief task facing political parties is to build and maintain unity within their ranks. Kam shows that party leaders rely on a mixture of strategies to offset any electoral pressure a candidate may feel for opposing the party line, from offering advancement to threatening discipline, and ultimately relying on a process of socialisation within the party to temper the potential maverick’s dissension. He reveals the underlying structure of party unity in modern Westminster parliamentary politics, and makes the point that candidates must ultimately choose between electoral popularity or career advancement and policy influence: it is control over careers that is the principal tool of the party for enforcing discipline (Kam 2002, p. 4).

**Harry Quick.** Examples of Quick’s maverickism were many. When official party policy ran against his beliefs, his tendency was to speak out, as he did in March 2003 by joining street protests against the invasion of Iraq and wearing a white armband during a visit to Australia by US president George Bush (ABC-TV 2005b), at a time when the Labor Party supported the war. Quick is a committed pacifist, a position he has held all his life and which he attributes to his father’s experiences at Gallipoli. He was also not averse to “stunts” to bring his causes media attention as he did on one occasion when he took apples onto the floor of parliament to protest against importing New Zealand fruit into Tasmania (ABC-TV 2005b).

True to type, Harry Quick is also well known for publically criticising his own party leaders. For instance, after Labor lost two of the five Tasmanian seats at the 2004 federal election he laid the blame at the feet of Tasmanian state premier, Paul Lennon. Quick, a Mark Latham supporter, believed Lennon's silence on the Howard government's forestry policy had sent out the wrong message to the heavily unionised timber workers: "I'm just disappointed the CFMEU were blinded by the rhetoric of Howard and the bluster of the timber industry. I also lay the blame on the Premier, who's been laying low for a week and he's let the five of us down. I lay the blame fairly and squarely on his doorstep" (Quick in Rae 2004). A year later, in 2005, Quick turned his attention to Latham's replacement, Kim Beazley, who had just begun his third stint as Labor leader, confiding to a journalist that he "lacked backbone" and was "still making stupid mistakes" (Quick in Attwood 2005).

Although Quick's battle with his party during the 2007 election campaign (see below) was probably the event that, over his political career, attracted the most national public attention to his maverick behaviour, his relationships with both the state administration and parliamentary wings of the party were always testy. For example, during the 2006 Tasmanian state election he caused a stir by endorsing the Greens' candidate for Franklin, Nick McKim. Quick rarely went to Labor's annual conferences where it became almost a tradition to censure him on the floor for his latest transgression and threaten him with expulsion.

For instance, at the 2003 conference, Left members reportedly hoped Quick would retire and not contest another election (ABC-TV 2005b), but his ability to keep winning the once safe Liberal seat meant he felt he could ignore the conferences. Consequently there were moves ahead of the 2004 election to have him replaced by the Left's Nicole Wells, but he was able to see off the intimidation, partly by threatening to run as an independent if not preselected. He did not attend the 2004 or 2005 conferences either; at the latter the Tasmanian Labor secretary, David Price, over remarks Quick had made about union influence in the party, said of Quick: "We do not have the luxury of members believing they have the right to publicly criticise the party for their own personal public gratification. People should learn to be in the team or get out" (Paine 2005). Quick reportedly said he was only doing what Franklin voters expected and had better things to do than go party conferences (Paine 2005).

But it was one of his most public acts of maverickism – his valedictory, it could be said – that probably caused the greatest stir: Harry Quick supported the Liberal Party candidate, Vanessa Goodwin, for his own seat of Franklin at the November 2007 election.

Earlier in 2006 the party had finally worn Quick down. He failed to gain preselection and announced he would retire from politics at the 2007 election, blaming Labor's left-right factional disputes and a lack of strong leadership. Quick hoped to keep the seat out of factional hands by sponsoring a staffer, Roger Joseph, for preselection. This was thwarted when the Left and Right struck a deal in which a candidate of the former would take Franklin, while Bass would go to the Right-backed Steve Reissig (although Bass sitting member Michelle O'Byrne eventually won the endorsement, but lost the election). Quick declared he would run as an independent if the nomination went, as had been publically floated, to Kevin Harkins, whom he described variously as a "right thuggish bastard", "some dropkick who's going to lose the seat", "shifty, intimidatory, totally unreliable and untrustworthy," and "a Victorian interloper" (Bowe 2007), the latter being a bit hypocritical considering Quick was born and schooled in Victoria himself.

With Joseph lacking factional support, Quick switched his public backing for the seat to state upper house member Allison Ritchie, a prominent Left member and known for her electorate-based style of politics. His call received no support from Ritchie, who said she did not wish to go to Canberra while she had a young child. Quick responded by claiming she had been intimidated by the Left not to stand. The factional deal ultimately delivered Harkins a solid bloc of votes from state conference delegates, and he gained the pre-selection.

But any thoughts of Harkins's victory silencing Quick was promptly ruined by Quick's public criticism of the pre-selection and his continued support of "just about any other candidate" (Raabus 2007).

I want the best person to replace me, not someone who figures they can ride on my hard work. Labor will probably have the shits with me but I don't really care. I've told Kevin Rudd that Kevin Harkins isn't the best candidate. That's been well known for donkeys' yonks. I want Kevin Rudd to be Prime Minister, but I don't want him when he's there to suddenly face a tarnished record by

revelations coming out about the elected member for Franklin. I want the best person to replace me, and I don't care which party that person comes from because I owe these people a hell of a lot. They've trusted me for 15 years, and when it comes to loyalty, my loyalty is to these people first and foremost. (Quick in AAP 2007)

Quick's accusations against Harkins, who was facing civil charges at the time for leading unlawful strikes, included arriving with "a satchel full of money from the Electrical Trades Union" (AAP 2007), stacking branches and having no commitment to the Labor seat which Quick held by 7.6 percent. In his public statements, Quick was careful not to directly back Dr Goodwin – instead, he said, "I am just actively not supporting Harkins" (AAP 2007).

But his actions left little doubt in journalists' minds. He angered Labor officials when he appeared at a bingo tournament during the campaign with Goodwin and the Liberal's Workplace Relations Minister, Joe Hockey. "He's taking me to a bingo hall," a delighted Mr Hockey told the *Melbourne Herald* as he headed to the airport on the day (Crabb 2007). Perversely, it was not just Quick's crusade against Harkins that gave Goodwin a boost, it was the resultant nation-wide publicity when Prime Minister John Howard, drawn into the media fracas, could not recall Goodwin's name in a radio interview. This was interpreted widely by the press as a publicity boost for the low profile Goodwin who, up to then, had only been a bit-player in the media narrative (Grattan 2007; Riley 2007).

Quick let it be known to Labor leader Kevin Rudd of his view that Harkins was not a good candidate for Franklin. Under Labor Party rules it is an offence to campaign for another party, meaning that Quick's expulsion was a very likely result. In an interview he said:

They'll probably expel me from the party, but I'll worry about that if and when it happens ... I guess I'll probably get a call in the morning and they'll try to stop me, but I am going to do it ... Anyone would be better than this guy. I mean, this is not even just scraping the bottom of the barrel. This is removing stuff from underneath a barrel when the barrel's been sitting around in disreputable circumstances for years and years. (Crabb 2007)

During 2007, Kevin Rudd tried to make light of Quick's campaign against Harkins: "I've known Harry for a long time, I love him dearly, he's exiting parliament, and Harry is Harry, okay. Harry's just Harry. He's right out there and, of course, we would rather these things didn't happen, but that's part of what Harry's like" (AAP 2007). But the party hierarchy would not dismiss his treachery so lightly and a referral was made to the party's administrative committee. A union official, Dean Mighell, who was himself expelled from the ALP earlier in May 2007 for boasting about extracting extra money from companies in award negotiations, voiced the partisan view that Quick should be thrown out of the party: "If Harry Quick actually campaigns against a Labor-endorsed candidate and for this horrible government we've got now, and he's not expelled, well something's seriously wrong with the Labor Party" (ABC-Radio 2007).

However, Quick won the battle (if not the war). The Coalition government launched a fierce public attack on Kevin Rudd accusing Labor of being too close to the unions, citing both Harkins and Mighell as the type of union "thugs" who control the Labor Party behind the scenes. With the election close, Kevin Rudd felt he had to be seen to be "tough on unions", forcing Harkins, on 9 August 2007, to withdraw his candidacy for Franklin. Vanessa Goodwin did not win the election but she recorded a 3.2 swing to the Liberals against Labor's last-minute replacement, Julie Collins. Franklin was one of only three of the country's 150 electorates that swung to the Liberals at the 2007 election.

Largely because of the publicity by Quick, Kevin Harkins was, like his union colleague Mighell, expelled from the party. But as Quick foresaw, the ALP machine extracted its revenge on him too: the administrative committee, on finding that Quick had not been a financial member of the ALP since April 2006, expelled him in August 2007. But for Quick, membership of the Labor Party meant a lot less than it did to traditional unionists like Harkins and Mighell, particularly once he had lost his party's preselection for the seat – he had nothing to lose. Harry Quick spent his final three months in parliament as an independent alongside Bob Katter, and seemed to quite enjoy it.

A footnote to Quick's political career occurred in February 2009. He announced he would re-enter politics as a candidate for the Greens at the Tasmanian upper house election in May that year, pitting himself against his old party in the form of Labor's State treasurer, Michael Aird, a veteran of 30-years in state politics. In true quixotic

Quick fashion, a few days later he withdrew his candidature, deciding to stay in retirement. According to a local newspaper account, this was a result of a concerted campaign to discredit Quick by a “rattled” Labor machine in “overdrive.” Aird, apparently was “apoplectic with worry” at the thought of the popular Quick taking his seat (Neales 2009). The inference was that Labor had not forgiven Harry Quick for his various maverick ways and anti-party stances over the years. According to the press, Quick was told, in no uncertain terms, that unless he withdrew the party would conduct a “dirty war” to publicly humiliate him over allegations of staff harassment from several years prior.

Harry Quick was a casualty a second time of the Labor Party’s intolerance of anyone who breaks with the party line. As outlined earlier, Labor imposes a high degree of discipline on its members largely due to its roots in the union movement. Traditionally, Labor is a “brotherhood” where solidarity and the binding caucus rule. It is often said that no one carries a grudge like Labor: “They’re great haters, those lefties. The older and less relevant they become, the more they hate. It’s a wonder there’s anyone left standing in the caucus room” (Attwood 2005).

It seemed that each election win emboldened Harry Quick to become more maverick, more feisty and more likely to take on his party in public. It is not hard to believe that Harry Quick was, in the end, a casualty of Labor’s ability to hate and take revenge against anyone who “rat” on the party. But if that is true, then the boot on the other foot is also true: Quick’s hatred of his rivals in the party was no less felt or acted on. He died by the sword he lived by.

This account of Harry Quick’s party relationship supports the first proposition posed by Research Question 3, that mavericks are more concerned with electoral popularity than career. Quick was a party Whip for three years, but that is as far as he went within the hierarchy. However, it is difficult to agree with Kam that it was *only* electoral popularity that Quick sought at the expense of promotion. Divining a politician’s motives is a difficult task and in the end they can only be inferred from his or her actions. Quick put his electorate ahead of his relationship with his party, but also put his principles ahead too.



It could also be argued that Quick had influence on policy making within the party, thereby lending support to the alternative proposition put by Question 3. Certainly, Quick's stance against union "thuggery" and control of ALP candidate preselection helped make the general issue of union influence on Labor policy a key election issue. It allowed the LNP to attack Kevin Rudd and accuse him of being soft on, and being subservient to, the "militant" unions, and ultimately forced Rudd to be "tough on unions." But could it be said that Quick, over his five parliamentary terms, had more policy influence as a maverick backbencher than a party acolyte? Quick was noisy at times on his pet issues, but there is no real evidence that he was listened to by the ALP to any great extent.

**Petro Georgiou.** As earlier outlined, prior to entering parliament, Georgiou had a meteoric career in public service, working for former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and his successor as leader, Andrew Peacock, during which time he was instrumental in establishing the multicultural broadcaster SBS; then later in senior party positions providing strategic support to Victorian premier, Jeff Kennett, who in the early 1990s presided over the reconstruction of Victoria's collapsed economy.

His maverick acts were many and have been consistent throughout his 15 years in parliament. He has constantly upset sections of the party with his support for, variously, the republic, the rights of same-sex couples, Aboriginal reconciliation, welfare and social reform; and for opposing anti-terrorism legislation, mandatory detention and citizenship tests.

To the ghostly applause of Menzies, Georgiou has stuck his head up time and time again for forgotten people in the same way that Menzies championed the so-called forgotten people of his era. Georgiou has marched for the cause of Aboriginal reconciliation and has steadfastly promoted harmonious and constructive multiculturalism. (Cutcliffe 2006)

Georgiou was not a publicity seeker like Quick and certainly Katter; his was a quieter demeanour, often reserved and his public statements invariably lacked hyperbole. A measured response was usual; for example, declaring at a public event in 2006 that "compassion and tolerance were signs of strength, not weakness" (Gordon 2006a). He went on to say:

Some people say I'm a hard man. Others say I'm a soft moderate. I'm neither. I simply believe in doing the right thing. The responsibility of a good parliamentarian is not to silently accept every new bill, but to work within the party honestly and with integrity to improve legislation and initiate reform. (Georgiou in Gordon 2006a)

One aspect of Georgiou's political life that upset sections of the organisational wing of the Liberal Party was that he ran against the "tradition" of those who held Kooyong before him. Kooyong was once held by Sir Robert Menzies, the founder of the Liberal Party, and among conservatives Menzies is not just deified, he is "absolutely revered" for his ideals and for his political legacy (Cutcliffe 2006). John Howard even went so far as to install Menzies's old desk in his parliamentary office. The seat is regarded by party insiders as a "leadership seat" where the candidate ought be someone able to serve in a Liberal cabinet and possibly as leader. This designation, some party stalwarts argue, should have prompted the departure of Georgiou much earlier to restore the Victorian division's status as the "jewel in the Liberal crown" (Landeryou 2009b). The adjacent seat of Higgins, then held by ex-Treasurer and one-time leadership aspirant Peter Costello, is similarly regarded:

The Liberals – in their endearing way – refer to Kooyong and Higgins as "leadership seats" where the candidates should be capable of rising to the top of the Liberal federal parliamentary ranks. Petro Georgiou was expected to shine in Canberra but emerged as something of a dullard by comparison to the member for Higgins. John Howard hated Petro and slowly tortured him over the years in a way many patriots found to be exhilarating if cruel. (Landeryou 2009a)

Whether Georgiou was a "dullard" or "slowly tortured" by Howard is moot - it might have started off that way, as the 2001 political cartoon below indicates, but perhaps it was the other way around by 2005?



Figure 4.8 Two Nicholson cartoons from the Australian (Australian Newspaper, 13 June 2001; 18 June 2005)

Another aspect where Georgiou differed from Quick and Katter is that he was expert at the factional game-play of party politics. Whereas Quick operated largely outside it, and Katter simply rejected it and left his party, Georgiou was an active participant and party-political “player.” He probably needed to be because of the prevailing party sentiment that the seat was wasted on him.

During Georgiou’s time in office, Liberal Party politics in Victoria was dominated by two main factions. One camp was led by Kennett and State leader Ted Baillieu, and included Fraser, Peacock and Georgiou, all considered “moderates” in today’s terminology; on the other side were the “drys” headed by state party president Michael Kroger, along with Costello and some Victoria Senators including Michael Ronaldson. The factional relationships were fluid and confusing, with a deal of swapping between camps. For example in 2006, Kroger, Costello and Kennett all backed Georgiou in the preselection contest, which is a testament to Georgiou’s ability to garner support when it matters across factional lines, despite the depth of ill-feeling he can generate. [Although perhaps, insofar as Costello’s motives were concerned, more caused by his power play against John Howard (Oaks 2006).]

At successive preselection battles, but particularly in 2003 and 2006, Georgiou was able to muster support from influential party leaders but also from the rank-and-file membership. In 2006 he crushed a nomination challenge from merchant banker and one time John Howard staffer, Joshua Frydenberg, who was backed in his bid for Kooyong by then Foreign Affairs Minister and Howard loyalist Alexander Downer. There is a

strong feeling that Howard paid only “lip service” to the convention that the leader supports the sitting members in preselection contests, and behind the scenes sponsored the push to get Frydenberg into the seat (Oaks 2006). Georgiou was not only prepared to take on his party leader over policy, but also the organisation as well.

Figure 4.9 shows a newspaper item prior to the 2009 preselection, not to be contested by Georgiou, which demonstrates how eagerly sought Kooyong is by Melbourne’s wealthy and well-connected “elite.” Landeryou (2009a) notes that, “With as many as a thousand members entitled to vote, and the Libs still maintaining the bizarre practice of attempting to choose a candidate on merit with speeches and performance in interviews with candidates of great significance, the Kooyong stoush is going to be messy and complex.” Multi-millionaire Andrew Abercrombie was believed, according to Landeryou (2009b), to be the Kennett/Baillieu faction’s “secret weapon” candidate to run against Frydenberg, having another tilt at preselection.

**Kooyong prize lures rich field**

ONE of Toorak's richest men may run for the blue-ribbon federal Liberal seat of Kooyong.

Andrew Abercrombie was once worth \$380 million and reportedly lives in Victoria's second most expensive house.

Now the FlexiGroup director is being named by party insiders as a candidate for the Liberal Party's most valued federal electorate. The race is on to replace outgoing sitting MP Petro Georgio.

Mr Abercrombie, 53, has kept a relatively low media profile but in 2007 was listed as Australia's 101st-richest person. Well known in Liberal circles he has, in the past, opened up his \$15 million Toorak mansion for fundraising, and is being described as close to state leader Ted Baillieu.

Mr Abercrombie is being linked to Mr Baillieu's attempts to retain control of his branches in Melbourne's east.

Mr Abercrombie's main opponent is expected to be investment banker Josh Frydenberg, who also is one of the best-credentialed candidates to run for a Liberal seat in years.

Institute of Public Affairs executive director John Roskam is still considering whether to run, and well-known Liberal lawyer John Pesutto is expected to contest the seat.

Mr Frydenberg is an Oxford-educated former barrister who was a senior adviser to Liberal PM John Howard.

A vote of more than 1000 people is expected in the middle of the year under the Liberal Party's new preselection system.

Every member of Kooyong will be allowed to vote, with 10 per cent of the party's State Council also choosing the Liberal candidate.

Kooyong was held by former Liberal leaders Robert Menzies and Andrew Peacock.

Figure 4.9 Herald Sun, 25 March 2009

Ultimately, the Abercrombie challenge did not eventuate. Frydenberg won the hotly contested preselection ballot over industrial relations lawyer John Pesutto 283 votes to 239 after all other contenders were excluded in the preceding rounds. The result can be considered a defeat for Ted Baillieu, whose power base had pursued various stratagems designed to thwart Frydenberg, the preferred candidate of the rival Kroger faction. One interpretation is that, without Georgiou, the power and influence of Jeff Kennett and

Ted Baillieu was greatly diminished. Frydenberg went on to win Kooyong at the 2010 election, retaining the margin established by Georgiou.

Considering Georgiou's relationship with his party in terms of Kam's thesis introduced earlier, the conclusions are ambiguous: to his supporters he was seen as a champion of the underdog and disadvantaged, someone who sacrificed his own career because he would not compromise his principles, especially when it came to social justice and human rights; to his critics, he was a failure because he held the iconic seat of Kooyong and did nothing with it.

Malcolm Fraser is of the view that Georgiou, a "true Liberal" (Maiden 2006a), should have been a minister. He told a newspaper in 2008 when Georgiou announced his retirement plans that he should be proud of his achievements and that he should have been in cabinet, given his "courage, intellectual capacity and independence of mind; he has better qualities than most ministers, and, in my view, a better man than most ministers" (Fraser in Wallace 2008).

He was never made a minister; the closest he got was an offer in October 1997 of the junior role of parliamentary secretary, which he turned down. He reportedly told John Howard at the time, "I'm too old and too ugly for that" (Gordon 2005). In 2005 he said in a newspaper that he was not bitter at being overlooked:

Yes, I would like to be a minister, but I think I am doing valuable things. Prime ministers have lots of considerations when they make decisions about cabinet and ministries. That's their decision and I respect it. (Gordon 2005)

And later in 2008:

I think there is a role for a person who could have been a minister to be on the backbench. I did what I thought was important and there were consequences, but I would do it all over again. (Gordon 2008b)

Kam's theory ascribes that a politician will forsake career advancement and policy influence for electoral success. There are two problems with this in relation to Petro Georgiou. The first is that Georgiou forsook career advancement, true, but not ostensibly for electoral success. It has been argued above that Georgiou was *sufficiently* popular with voters in Kooyong – perhaps the "doctors' wives" – to be re-elected and to

perform better than comparable Liberal seats, but it would be difficult to argue that he conducted his maverick path solely for the purpose of garnering popularity with his electorate. Rather, it appears Georgiou was and is a genuine follower of doing what he believes is right: a conviction politician.

The second query with Kam's approach is that Georgiou, like the other mavericks under review here, does have policy influence despite his maverick ways. Again, it is not the case of choosing between getting elected or influencing policy – in Georgiou's case he managed both. It is as much about conscience versus promotion. An example of Georgiou's policy influence is illustrated in one of his most publicised maverick acts: crossing the floor in August 2006 to vote against legislation intended to put women and children asylum seekers into detention camps.

Georgiou has been an advocate for refugee rights all his parliamentary career, but particularly once the government instigated the "Pacific Solution" in 2002, the policy of transporting asylum seekers to detention camps on island nations in the Pacific Ocean (Maley 2008). By 2004 he was meeting with refugee advocates and representatives from the Baxter detention centre. Then in February 2005 he made a speech in the House of Representatives where he publically challenged the Coalition's policy on asylum seekers. He wanted those refugees still in detention to be released and an amnesty for over 6000 refugees who were in the country on temporary protection visas. He also wanted an end to the policy of indefinite detention of those deemed ineligible for visas who cannot be returned to another country. This request from Georgiou, with support of some other backbenchers, was asked of a government that won the 2001 election largely on the strength of its hard-line border protection policy in the wake of the 9/11 and Tampa events. National security was still an important issue at the 2004 election, and Howard and Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone, predictably, rejected Georgiou's request.

At the time, one unnamed Liberal MP prophetically told a newspaper, "I think he'll be vindicated in the end. I think the policy will change along the lines Petro has suggested. Nobody will thank him for it, but the reality will be that he was instrumental in moving the Government to a more sensible position" (Gordon 2005).

Georgiou represented a small group of moderates in the parliament, and a larger group of voters outside, who felt strongly on issues such as refugees and Iraq. Their influence was evident in the swings against Liberals in inner-city seats at the 2004 election – a trend Georgiou had largely managed to defy, as previously discussed. Georgiou's views were supported at the time by a growing group of Coalition backbenchers including Russell Broadbent, Judi Moylan, Judith Troeth and the National, John Forrest.

During 2005, Georgiou continued to advocate for refugee rights as public opinion started to shift towards his views. High profile cases, such as the stateless Afghani Mohammed Qasim who had been imprisoned at Baxter for four years, and the mentally ill Cornelia Rau, detained despite not being a refugee, helped the moderates' case. Georgiou threatened to introduce a private member's bill to soften the Liberal policy, forcing Howard to make a series of changes to government policy to bring it more in line with the demands of the moderates. Troeth, for example, was reportedly "...overjoyed that we finally got some sense of human dignity and human compassion into dealing with refugees and asylum seekers" (in Gordon 2006b).

As a consequence of backbencher activity, by the end of 2005 the Howard government had drafted an amendment Bill to the immigration legislation that went some way to meeting Georgiou and his backers' concerns. In addition, in the party room Howard made some promises and commitments for further reforms.

However, on 13 April 2006 Howard changed his mind. Provoked by "grumblings from the Indonesian Government" (Dodson 2006) over a decision in January by immigration officials to grant protection to Papuan asylum seekers, he proposed laws that would send all asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat to detention centres at Nauru, Christmas Island or Manus Island in Papua New Guinea – or "Pacific Solution Mark 2" as sections of the media began to call it (Brennan 2006; Metcalfe 2006). Georgiou's reacted angrily, saying that "The bill proposes a dramatic change to the broad framework that the Government committed to a year ago. The consequences would be draconic" (AAP 2006a). Georgiou and other moderates believed these new arrangements breached Howard's pledge from 2005, that children would be held only as a "last resort." Troeth warned there would be serious concerns if the new rules contravened the Prime Minister's pledge to keep children out of detention: "We've achieved a great deal so far and I don't want to go backwards" (in Maiden 2006b).

By mid-May the press were reporting that Howard's new "hardline" border protection legislation had "hit the rocks." At a "heated" Liberal Party meeting Troeth, Georgiou and Broadbent declared they would not support the legislation (Schubert et al. 2006). By the end of May more Coalition MPs had voiced concern, including Judi Moylan, Bruce Baird, Marise Payne and Barnaby Joyce. The newspapers reported a "backbench revolt" (Walsh 2006).

The government's large majority at the time in the lower house meant that even if Georgiou, Broadbent, Baird and Moylan all crossed the floor, the vote would not be defeated. But in the Senate the amendments would be lost if one government and all non-government senators voted against it. Of particular worry for Howard were reports that micro-party Family First's sole MP, Senator Steve Fielding, was considered likely to vote against the legislation (Gordon 2006b). That meant that any move to cross the floor from Liberal senators Payne or Troeth, or the National's Joyce, or even if two abstained, would see Howard defeated. As a consequence, the government did not bring the Bill on for debate in the House at the end of May, as was originally planned.

In mid-June, just before the Bill was again scheduled to be debated, a Senate committee told the Prime Minister to abandon the new laws. The three government senators on the committee, Marise Payne, Brett Mason and Nigel Scullion, all put their names to the report. In response to the backbench push, Howard agreed to some changes to better protect women and children, and he delayed introduction again, this time to August. However, the backbenchers continued to oppose the laws. On 8 August Petro Georgiou and Russell Broadbent publically announced they would cross the floor despite John Howard "pleading" with dissenters. Georgiou responded by saying, "One of the basic values of Liberalism was the right of an MP to vote with his conscience and to oppose that which was unprincipled ... this Bill would have the effect of removing the protection for detainees under Australia's legal and judicial system" (in Dodson and Banham 2006). In parliamentary debate on 9 August (Hansard 2006), Georgiou described the Bill as the "most profoundly disturbing piece of legislation" he had encountered in more than a decade in parliament.

Howard finally introduced the Bill on 10 August 2006. Russell Broadbent, Petro Georgiou and Judi Moylan became the first Liberals to cross the floor against the government in the House since it was elected in 1996, a "unique event" (Bennister



2007, p. 14). (Although they were not the first Howard Government Coalition members to cross the floor. On 15 September 2005 (twice) and 8 February 2006 the Nationals Kay Hull (Riverina) crossed the floor to vote with the Opposition on Telstra bills.)

National John Forrest and Liberal Bruce Baird abstained. Notwithstanding, the Bill passed 79-62 because of the government's majority, and it was set to go to the Senate. But on 14 August John Howard scrapped the legislation. He told a radio interviewer that it was "inevitable the plan would be defeated and it was not worth going through a protracted debate" (ABC-Radio 2006):

I don't feel humiliated, I'm disappointed because I think the country would have been served by having a stronger border protection Bill. But we have been in office for 10 years and if you look at the track record of previous Coalition governments I think we've had fewer of these situations than others.  
(Howard on ABC-Radio 2006)

The backbench revolt over asylum legislation, led by Petro Georgiou, is now part of Australian political and Liberal Party folklore. At the time, some commentators saw it as "essential pragmatism" (Henderson 2006b) by Howard the "master fixer" (Dodson 2006) but it is hard to escape the conclusion, supported by history, that Howard *was* humiliated: he could have and should have shelved the legislation long before forcing it into parliament – and it signified in many ways how out of touch the government had become with the Australian voter. The Coalition trailed Labor in the opinion polls for most of 2006, and went on to lose the 2007 election decisively. Howard lost his seat.

For his part, Georgiou continued his advocacy for refugees with the incoming Labor government. Although describing 2008 reforms to detention policy as "substantial" he was nevertheless critical of clauses that allowed for ministerial and administrative discretion: "Unchecked discretionary powers in the hands of ministers or departments have proven a recipe for abuse and inhumanity in recent times. Our treatment of asylum seekers and refugees has improved and the new changes are significant. But the task of reform is not complete" (Georgiou 2008).

In summary it is concluded here, as it was with the findings on Harry Quick, that it is difficult to say that Georgiou was more concerned with his electoral popularity than he was with promotion or policy influence. It appears more that he was a genuine

conviction politician who followed his conscience, albeit that he judged his electorate well. In November 2008, in a newspaper interview on the announcement of his retirement, he said:

In life, do you know how many things you'd like to walk past and not notice?  
Lots. But sometimes you do notice, and when you notice, you have to do something. I have really considered quite carefully over the years my choices and their consequences. Every time I made a choice I knew what the consequences would be and I stand by the choices I made. (in Gordon 2008b)

Georgiou has had a significant impact on policy and decision making as the “conscience of the Liberal Party” (Gordon 2008b; Heinrichs 2003). The example given above was one of many Georgiou campaigns that drew publicity, but he is also credited for achieving much out of the limelight. He was active on government committees that operate away from the public eye, and was known for putting his views directly to ministers. When he was mentioned in the media, it was usually because of contributions made at party meetings or behind the scenes, then relayed to the press by others. Petro Georgiou, as Gordon (2005) observed, was not a politician who seeks out the limelight, but he is a politician who had an impact on his party decision making.

**Bob Katter.** Australia’s entrenched political parties, Labor, Liberal and National, were formed on the basis of social and political cleavage (Jaensch and Mathieson 1998, p. 11): the Labor Party was predominantly urban and working class; the Liberals a combination of rural and urban, but essentially middle-class and business focussed; while the Country/Nationals represented farming and regional self-interest. For decades the Country/National Party was the natural fit for rural voters in Queensland and NSW. But Katter has now replaced the party in his voters’ eyes as the standard-bearer of social conservatism and agrarian socialism. He is one of a relatively small number of politicians who have left the National Party to win otherwise safe seats as independents. Others include Tony Windsor, from New England in NSW, which had been held by the Nationals continuously since 1922 before Windsor’s victory in 2001; and Peter Andren (who died in 2007), representing Calare in NSW. These three independents (and more recently another ex-National turned independent, Rob Oakeshott in the NSW seat of Lyne), reflect a belief in regional areas that the major parties have become disengaged from their local communities (Costar and Curtin 2004, p. 18).

To generalise on where the political energies of the three mavericks under review here are spent (recognising that generalising is a dangerous thing to do), if Harry Quick was electorate focused and Petro Georgiou issue focused, then Bob Katter might be categorised as vision focused; if Quick was eccentric and Georgiou measured, then Katter is best described as passionate.

As previously outlined, Katter's early life in Cloncurry in Northern Queensland was steeped in politics. In the early 1970s Katter began to identify with the views and politics of then Queensland Country Party Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen – views that were completely opposite those of the Labor Prime Minister at the time, Gough Whitlam: “Gough dragged me into politics; everything he was doing was destructive. I got derailed by the combination of the stick of Whitlam and the carrot of Bjelke-Peterson” (Katter in Martens 2008).

Katter was first elected to the Queensland state parliament for the seat of Flinders in 1974, becoming a minister in 1983. He resigned in 1992 to contest Kennedy for the Nationals at the March 1993 federal general election. (His father had died in March 1990, exactly one week before the 1990 election day, at which Kennedy was won by Labor.) He won the seat with a 4.9 percent swing but the Coalition remained in opposition. At the next election, in 1996, with John Howard now leader of the Liberals, the Coalition prevailed and formed government. Katter won the 1996 and 1998 elections for the National Party with double-digit margins, but found himself increasingly at odds with the Liberal-National Coalition on economic and social issues. For example, his maverick positions on competition policy and race relations caused considerable problems for the Howard government (Uhr and Wanna 2000).

In earlier discussions, it was shown that Katter has a reputation as a defender of “ordinary people” and “country values” against (what he sees as) the excesses of economic rationalism and centralised government. In many ways he portrays himself as “one of us” – hard-working country folk who have been ignored and forgotten, against “them” – city-centric, rationalist, big business and big government. The phrasing of Katter's speeches and public statements is usually laced with these types of descriptions and the tone is nearly always emotional and often indignant. This can be contrasted with Georgiou, for example, who feels no less passionate about his issues, but who conducts himself in a more measured and, possibly, objective way. With Katter, the

impression is that he is constantly on a crusade, a mission. He is the arch anti-politician, a celebrity figure, the “man in the white akubra,” leading the battle to save country lifestyles.

Certainly Katter, in terms of Research Question 3, was more concerned with his electorate than he was with promotion or career within the party; and like Petro Georgiou his impact on decision-making and policy formulation is arguably significant; more significant that it would have been if he had stayed in the party. One example was the sale of Telstra: Bob Katter could not stop the eventual privatisation, but he did have a significant impact on its delay, and he did extract concessions and benefits for his constituents.

Telstra was privatised in three separate stages or tranches, known in the media as T1 (1997), T2 (1999) and T3 (2006). The sale of Telecom/Telstra had been an issue debated as far back as the late 1980s and early 1990s under the Hawke Labor government. At the time, privatisation of public assets was a significant part of both Labor and Coalition policy, with the Commonwealth Bank, the Commonwealth airports, the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories and Qantas all being sold under Labor. Once the Liberal-National Party Coalition came to office in 1996, the Telstra sale became a high priority with one third of the company sold to the public as T1, and then a further 16 percent as T2 in 1999. At the time, attempts to get support for a full sale failed when independent Senators Brian Harradine and Mal Colston did not support the Bill. The Howard government had to settle for 16 percent, enabling it to privatise almost half of Telstra with the government maintaining a majority shareholding of 50.1 percent (O’Leary 2003).

Bob Katter had always been a vocal opponent of the privatisation of Telstra, and it was a principal reason, along with what he believed was the abandonment of the sugar industry, why he left the Coalition prior to the 2001 general election. At the time, Communications Minister Richard Alston called him a “national disgrace” for opposing the Telstra sale (Head 2001). But Katter boosted his vote in 2001 by attacking the Liberal Party and some National Party leaders, particularly over tariffs and the Telstra sell-off. “He has made a career out of bashing his brethren,” one journalist observed (Head 2001).

The Coalition's election platform in the November 2001 federal election included a commitment that there would be no further sale of Telstra until telecommunications services in rural and regional Australia were adequate. This can be regarded as a victory for Katter who, along with other independents forced the Nationals to become very nervous about a backlash in their heartland at the ballot box. In August 2002, almost a year after the election and amidst further debate as to the adequacy of regional telecommunications services, the government announced an inquiry into regional telecommunications services, the Estens Inquiry (O'Leary 2003).

Katter maintained his rage. According to Switzer, "Katter reflected deepening conservative anxiety over the electoral routs when he complained: 'If they [the Howard Government] want to continue with these policies, like the sale of Telstra, deregulation of the milk industry and GST then they'll be as popular as a brown snake in a sleeping bag'" (2001, p. 6).

The Estens Inquiry was largely positive about the Telstra's ability to service the regions, and subsequently Howard managed to bring most of his National Party colleagues into line. In June 2003 the government introduced legislation for the full privatisation of Telstra. In July 2003 Katter wrote:

The full privatisation of Telstra issue represents a clear-cut divide between city and country and presents a problem for the National Party in Queensland and New South Wales. In regional Australia it is a burning issue. People here have seen service after service depleted, diminished or abolished. Under corporatisation or privatisation they have seen employees simply vanish. Regional Australia is well aware of the further implications of corporatisation or privatisation and no amount of bulldust from the politicians will alter their view. (Katter 2003)

In March 2004 the Bill finally passed through the House of Representatives. Katter and other opponents had managed to negotiate "some improvements" but believed a privatised Telstra would never be properly accountable to government. "Once they become a private organisation when I ring them they'll tell me to go jump in the lake and I suppose quite rightly too. I mean, they're out to make a quid. Their duty, their legal obligation, is to maximise profits for their shareholders" (Katter on ABC-Radio 2004). However, it became clear that the legislation would not pass through the Senate,

so Howard shelved the Bill and said he would introduce new legislation if he won the 9 October 2004 election.

The Coalition was returned, and immediately placed the sale of Telstra back on the agenda, although they accepted they would have to wait until the Coalition took control of the Senate after 1 July 2005 (although it took an effort to convince the National's new Senator Barnaby Joyce). Legislation finally passed both houses on 8 February 2006. The Nationals Kay Hull (Riverina) crossed the floor to vote with the Opposition.

Bob Katter was key in at least delaying the sale of Telstra and in obtaining considerable concessions in the process. As a member of the Nationals it is doubtful he could have played as pivotal a role, even if he had stood by his convictions, like Hull, and crossed the floor. In parliament he had this to say:

... we Independents have taken a fair bit of criticism for our stand on this, and there is no doubt that our stand has held up the sale for three or four years ... I make no apologies for the fact that we did very heavy lobbying, publicly, privately and through the media, and I have absolutely no doubt that my colleagues from Calare and New England played an instrumental role, and I along with them, I will say, in securing the support of some of those people to oppose the sale. If we had rolled over and accepted the proposition being put forward by spokespeople on the other side, we would have lost \$650 million plus the \$3,000 million – or rather \$3,200 million. We would have lost \$4,000 million if we had rolled over. Congratulations to us. We secured \$4,000 million. (Katter 2005)

But he also recognised the “battle was lost.”

I would like to pat myself on the back for that, but I will not, because we may have lost the battle. It is not over till it is over, but maybe we have lost the battle over the sale of Telstra. (Katter 2005)

Katter's ability to influence policy over Telstra reforms existed, not because his vote was needed to pass the legislation. The Coalition had the numbers in the lower house; but Katter's agitation put pressure on the National Party members of the Coalition to oppose the bill and possibly cross the floor. Katter's campaign also influenced independents and minor party Senators in the upper house where the government did

not have a majority. So it can be argued that Katter, as a maverick, had an influence on National Party policy greater than if he had been a party loyalist.

However, his policy influence became greater following the 2010 election when Katter, three other independents (Oakeshott, Windsor and Andrew Wilkie) and a Green Party member (Adam Bandt) between them held the balance of power. All found themselves courted by Labor and the Coalition as both parties tried to get the numbers to form government.

Katter sided with the Coalition while Oakeshott, Windsor, Wilkie and Bandt supported Labor, which just gave Labor the numbers to form government. However, Katter's policy influence is still significant because of the fragility of Labor's position – a bare one-seat majority. Prime Minister Julia Gillard agreed to prioritise a number of projects in Katter's electorate, including transmission lines to connect renewable energy projects to the national grid and a \$350 million government grant for the construction of a large-scale solar generation plant along the Townsville to Mt. Isa transmission line (Pannett 2010). Katter said at the time that he "strongly appreciates" the prime minister's integrity and "looks forward to a highly successful working relationship with both the Gillard government and the opposition" (Pannett 2010).

Bob Katter is a “fighter” for his vision of Australia, particularly rural Australia. Some battles he loses in the end, like Telstra, but takes as much as he can from the loss. Others he does better, like his part in preventing the sale of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in NSW. “If it wasn't for Peter Andrew, Tony Windsor and myself, this country's greatest asset would be owned by foreigners” (Katter in Martens 2008).

In terms of Research Question 3, passionate, visionary – zealous – mavericks like Bob Katter do have significant impact on party decision making. Because Katter represents the views of the traditional rural base of the National Party, and because he is so vocal and strident in championing those views, he makes life very uncomfortable politically for the Nationals trying to be part of a central, centralist political Coalition.

**Summary.** The purpose of Research Question 3 was to test the maverick's relationship with the party. It was found that the three mavericks were not particularly concerned about their careers or promotion within their party. There was, to an extent, a concern

for electoral popularity, more so for Katter and Quick than Georgiou, but still present in all. There was also a degree of conviction politician involved, whereby all of the subjects hold strong beliefs that they will not compromise. Overall, mavericks are more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with career.

In addition, a case has been made for each maverick that they do exert policy influence on the party. It is not possible to say with certainty, in the confines of this study, that that influence would be more or less significant if the subject had gained a ministerial position; but it is possible to say that because all operate to various degrees outside the party discipline they are able to use their maverickism to promote their own causes and points of view. The conclusion is that their policy influence is at least greater than a “normal” backbencher.

#### **4.5 Case study conclusions**

The subjects of this House of Representatives study – Harry Quick, Petro Georgiou and Bob Katter – were selected (in Chapter 3) because they are mavericks that provide a cross section of ALP and Coalition memberships in the House of Representatives. It is clear all three were “hard-bitten” by the world prior to becoming federal politicians: Quick had toughed it out as a school teacher and electoral officer in some of the most deprived suburbs in the country; Georgiou had seen life from the inside of the Prime Minister’s office as well as refereed the factional brawling of the Victorian Liberal Party; while Katter had stuck with Joh Bjelke-Petersen right throughout the demise and destruction of that discredited state government.

Despite these different paths to parliament, they share a number of traits: they are all long-term, lower-house, backbenchers; they all entered parliament at about the same time; and they are all of the “baby boom” generation. They also came with a reputation for maverick behaviour, so it is no surprise that they carried this through their parliamentary careers. There are some conclusions that can be drawn that help answer the research question, “What consequences and impacts do maverick politicians have on contemporary Australian politics, particularly Australian political parties?”

The first Research Question, which asks if mavericks are adept at owning, framing and “fixing” issues, is answered in the affirmative. Petrocik’s (1996) research into the phenomenon of issue ownership during campaigning was used as a framework. His



principal hypotheses were that issues are specific to candidates, and that voters will support the candidate with the best reputation for handling the important issues. All three mavericks were found to be specific and focused in their handling of the issues agenda – none try to be “all things to all voters.” Mavericks are well known by their voters for their core messages and policy positions.

Harry Quick and Bob Katter focussed squarely on their electorates. They both developed a campaign advantage in adopting a “special relationship” with their constituents, and regularly distancing himself from the major parties so as to align the voters’ beliefs with their own. Quick identified with the blue-collar and welfare dependant “battlers” continually championing their causes and by taking a very strong physical presence in the electorate: he was the epitomous locally-based, entrenched backbencher.

Katter is more of a champion for causes than Quick’s focus on bread-and-butter issues such as welfare and housing. Petro Georgiou developed relationships with his voters too, but in a different way. He aligned himself to their progressive liberal ideals which seemed to strike a chord. The evidence showed that Georgiou’s vote effort over his time in parliament was better than comparable conservative seats, suggesting that he was successful at owning the issues important to his voters.

Petrocik’s central thesis is therefore supported: a campaign effect exists for all three mavericks because they understood their voters and engendered in them the belief that the important issues resided in the candidate and not in the party.

The second Research Question, which inquires if mavericks are better at “conviction politics” and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of “celebrityhood”, is also supported. All three mavericks were found to be conviction politicians but, not surprisingly, their conviction platform is not general - it is selective to the issues the maverick owns. It was concluded that “maverick politician” and “conviction politician” fit together: not all conviction politicians are mavericks, but perhaps all mavericks are conviction politicians.

Likewise, they were all found to play celebrity politics, often manifesting itself in an anti-political guise, consistent with research by ’t Hart and Tindall (2009) who assert that politicians incorporate a “no party politics” persona to develop a celebrity appeal.

Thus the mavericks, in launching their attacks on the party and differentiating themselves from the political class, play to a general disquiet in the community with “retail politics” - an anti-politics sentiment.

Finally, Research Question 3, relying on research by Kam (2002), asked if mavericks put electoral popularity above career. It was concluded that for Quick, Georgiou and Katter it was not a stark choice between the two: none really pursued a career path within their respective parties, but neither were they obsessed with electoral popularity. It was the conviction politician in them all that appeared to triumph, and although, as previously discussed, they were successful at aligning this with their voters’ concerns, this did not manifest itself as raw electoral opportunism.

A rationale was put forward for each maverick to show that, despite the lack of career and promotion within the party, they did have a policy influence on the party. It is difficult to measure that influence, and perhaps they could have had more policy input if they had toed the party line and become a portfolio holders. However, it can be said that they all used their maverickism and notoriety to prosecute their policy agenda, it appears to a greater effect than the capabilities of many sycophantic, party faithful backbencher.

## 5 The Senate: Barnaby Joyce and Ross Lightfoot

### 5.1 Background

**Introduction.** In the discussion on the thesis methodology and design (Chapter 3), a consistent reporting structure across the case studies was proposed to maximise objective cross-case analysis and interpretation. This improves the robustness of the findings, provides a consistent and standardised analytical approach, and allows for validity within each case and reliability between case findings.

That is not to imply or require that the tests and methods used in the preceding case study should be replicated exactly across succeeding cases, because in many instances that is not possible. One principal reason for this case study is that Joyce and Lightfoot are members of the Senate, whereas Katter, Quick and Georgiou are all members of the House of Representatives. The electoral systems are completely different between the houses and this has implications for testing and analysis. A feature of Senate elections is that most Senators are, in effect, not elected by the general populace in the same way as House of Representative members. The “above-the-line” option in the Senate’s proportional electoral system – where voters can indicate their preference for one of the party lists rather for individual candidates – means that more than 95 percent of ballot papers are allocated according to preference distributions registered by the political parties prior to the elections (Evans 2006, p. 10).

Therefore, for major party Senate hopefuls, their campaigning is essentially not with the public, but with the party officials and office bearers to ensure that their name appears at either the number one or number two spot on the ballot paper. Candidates in these positions are almost assured of election. Candidates at number three on the party list may or may not be elected, but that is not necessarily dependent on the individual’s campaign, but rather the party campaign, the preference-swapping deals done by the party officials, and by the general movement of voters *en masse* between the two parties. Commonly, in Australia, this movement is somewhere up to a five percent “swing” from election to election, rarely more (Tucker 2009), which means that the major party number three candidate is the one favoured by the general swing of voters for that election.

As alluded to in the introduction to the thesis, one of the aims of the study is to attempt to see what differences exist between mavericks in the two houses of parliament. It is because both federal chambers use quite different electoral systems that consideration of and comparison between the two becomes integral to the research. To that end, it is not the purpose in this thesis to give a detailed account of the role and operations of the Senate, or the wider Australian parliamentary system. [See, for example, Evans (2006).] However, the mavericks exist and function within these systems, so the implications are important and will be considered as they arise during the discussions on each of the Research Questions.

To summarise, a consistent theoretical framework and reporting structure is applied to the propositions in each case study, but that may require different analytical techniques because of the different electoral systems in which the mavericks exist. As with the House of Representative study, this case begins with some contextual background on the subject mavericks' lives up to the point they were elected to federal parliament.

**Ross Lightfoot.** Ross Lightfoot was 60 years old when he entered the Senate in May 1997, filling a vacancy caused by the death of an incumbent Liberal Senator, John Panizza. Under section 15 of the *Australian Constitution*, State legislatures must fill casual vacancies with a member of the same party as the party of the Senator whose death or resignation caused the vacancy, and that person holds office for the remainder of the vacating Senator's term. The convention and reality is that the party selects the replacement, and the state parliament approves the nomination.

Lightfoot was already a controversial figure who had become well established as a maverick, with a penchant for causing offence and stirring emotions. His views on Aboriginal culture and links to right-wing groups such as the League of Rights were seen in some sections of the community as especially odious. The Jewish community was particularly upset: as the *Australia/Israel Review* (Kapel 1997) put it at the time, "How did this man ever get Federal Liberal Party preselection? If the collective West Australian Liberal Party memory had lapsed from his earlier forays could it also have turned a blind eye to what was to come next?"

Lightfoot was born in Port Lincoln, South Australia, in 1936 and was educated at the local schools, although he dropped out of high school at age 13. At 17 he became a

national service recruit then, after his army discharge in 1956, lived and worked in and around Port Lincoln variously as a jackeroo and plasterer. He joined the Liberal Party and the Citizens Military Force (forerunner to the Army Reserve) later that decade. In 1959 he signed up with the South Australian mounted police where he stayed until 1963. He resigned to take up study again, aged 26, at the Adelaide School of Mines. In 1967 he left South Australia to enroll at Western Australia's Kalgoorlie School of Mines and started mining a year later. By the 1970s he was developing and working not only mining leases but large pastoral and grazing holdings.

Engaging in the Western Australian post-war mining boom appears to have been a profitable career move for Lightfoot; during the 1970s and 1980s he established a series of companies, including Southern Goldfields Mining Co, Eureka Minerals and A-CAP Development Limited, a mining and exploration company of which he became both a director and chairman (Kapel 1997). In a media interview in 1995 he said of Western Australia, "You can come here with nothing, literally with nothing, and you can walk away in 10 years' time as a multi-millionaire" (ABC radio reported in Kapel 1997).

Like Bob Katter, Lightfoot had time as a state parliamentarian prior to federal politics. He served in WA's lower house from 1986 to 1989 and its upper house from 1993 to 1997 (Egan 2002b) and through the 1980s and 1990s managed to combine a parliamentary career with his mining interests, not without considerable controversy. A-CAP went into liquidation in 1990 with more than \$2 million owed to unsecured creditors, who were eventually to receive eight cents in the dollar. The Australian Federal Police investigated and had active files on the company and Lightfoot for a number of years, although no charges were laid (Shannon 1997).

The Collapse of A-CAP was preceded by and associated with a "travel rort" case against Lightfoot in only his second year in state parliament. In July 1987 Lightfoot and another WA state Liberal MP, George Cash, travelled to China as part of a parliamentary study group, funded by their parliamentary travel allowances and expenses. Cash was also a director of an A-CAP subsidiary, and the two used the taxpayer-funded trip to negotiate multimillion dollar rights for A-CAP to recover gold from mining waste in China. According to one media report:

... the visit spurred Australia's Ambassador to China, Ross Garnaut, to fire off an official complaint to DFAT, expressing 'surprise and concern' that the pair, on arriving in China, had declared themselves as representatives of A-CAP when the embassy in Beijing had organised an official welcome for them in the belief it was a parliamentary study group. 'Certainly we feel embarrassed by having been unwilling agents in what amounts to misrepresentations to the People's Institute [Foreign Affairs]' wrote Garnaut. (Crikey.com.au 2002)

When the matter was investigated by the West Australian Government both Cash and Lightfoot were ordered by then State Liberal leader Barry McKinnon to repay the misused parliamentary expenses of \$6000.

Although the controversy would be as much as most politicians would want, perhaps the aspect of Lightfoot's pre-Senate life that has given him the most public notoriety were his often-expressed, what many perceived to be, far-right racist beliefs. His "vendetta" against Aborigines [as the Green Left movement called it (Dixon 1997)] began soon after he entered the WA parliament in 1987 where he criticised Aboriginal influence over mining, claiming that "Aboriginal people in the (Northern) Territory behave like oil-rich, mineral-rich sheikhs." Later that year in state parliament he argued, "We should not turn back the clock and push these people back to the Stone Age, to their superstitions, their killings and their dreadful way of life.... The only answer is assimilation" (in Kapel 1997).

Later in his 1993 maiden speech in the WA upper house, Lightfoot said, "I intend to frame my speech around Aboriginal Australians and their contribution to society, their genesis, some of their problems ... No Aborigines in Australia prior to white settlement had ever formed a civilised community ... As a civilised nation, I do not know whether we could accept Aboriginal culture ... I hold no guilt for what happened to the Aboriginal people, and black children can have no guilt for what happened to the early white settlers, who were killed or mutilated" (Lightfoot 1993).

Lightfoot's views on Aborigines were very much aligned with those of the Australian League of Rights, a declared anti-Semitic and racist organisation formed by pro-Hitler elements in the 1940s (Shannon 1997). The League believes the Nazis' mass murder of Jews to be a myth, that Asians and Africans are inferior to whites and that land rights for Aborigines is a communist plot. Responding to charges of League of Rights

influence in the WA Liberal Party, Lightfoot said in the WA parliament in 1994: “Let me refer members to the policies of the League, which include adopting an immigration policy that prevents social fragmentation and friction, imposing a limit on non-European immigrants to a rate at which they can be assimilated, and holding a referendum on immigration policy. Many Australians from all sides would agree with that policy” (in Dixon 1997).

But his links to ultra-right groups did not stop there. In 1997 a petition to the US president, with Lightfoot’s name on it, was published in the magazine of an American neo-fascist cult led by convicted fraud, Lyndon LaRouche. In Western Australia at the time, LaRouchites controlled the “wacky” (Daley 2007) Citizens Electoral Council, another group which promotes anti-Aboriginal racism and anti-Semitism. They believe (among other things) that a conspiracy exists between world Jewry, British intelligence and the British royal family to flood the world with drugs and pornography, and to provoke the imminent collapse of the world economic system.

In addition to failed multi-million dollar mining ventures, China travel irregularities, inflammatory statements about Aborigines and associations with the far-right, there is one further aspect of note – or notoriety – from Lightfoot’s pre-Senate life to mention: he set in train the events that became known as the Easton affair, which resulted in the suicide of Penny Easton, two Royal Commissions and crippled the career of Labor’s Carmen Lawrence (Nicholson 2007).

Penny and Brian Easton separated in 1986 and disputed the divorce settlement in the Family Law Court. The Eastons had developed friendships on opposite sides of the political divide: Mrs Easton confided in Ross Lightfoot, his wife Sue, and others in the Liberal Party; while Mr Easton was close to Labor premier Brian Burke, who had previously appointed him WA’s Public Service Commissioner (Hawthorne 2005). One of Penny Easton’s complaints in the dispute with her husband was that she believed he concealed a \$200,000 severance payment from Exim Corporation, a body created by the Burke Government during the WA Inc era and of which Brian Easton had been general manager. [The WA Inc Royal Commission investigated a period between 1983 and 1991 in Western Australia when the state governments colluded illegally in major business dealings. For a summary, see Lawrence (1993).]

On November 17, 1987 Ross Lightfoot, Liberal member for Murchison-Eyre in the Legislative Assembly, raised, under parliamentary privilege, Family Court proceedings between Penny and Brian Easton. He asked Burke if he knew of the payment to Brian Easton and if it was being concealed. Following, there was intense media interest and a series of protracted events that led in November 1992 to a Labor backbencher, John Halden, lodging in parliament a petition of last resort from Brian Easton. This claimed that Liberal leader Richard Court had provided confidential information to Penny Eastern in the divorce case, and that Mrs Easton had lied about Mr Easton in the Family Court.

The next day Carmen Lawrence, then WA premier, denied she knew the petition was to be lodged but several of her ministers later testified that she was present when the plan was discussed in cabinet. Three days later Penny Eastern gassed herself in her car, citing in her suicide note Brian Easton's petition as a factor in her decision (Kapel 1997).

Penny Eastern's death set off a chain of events which included a Royal Commission and trials for Brian Easton, John Halden and Carmen Lawrence. The Marks Royal Commission found that Lawrence had misled the Western Australian Parliament concerning her knowledge of and role in the tabling of the petition. Labor figures attacked the Commission, including prime minister Paul Keating who denounced it as a political stunt and accused the Commissioner of bias (Trioli 1999). Brian Easton was charged with contempt and sentenced to seven days gaol by the Legislative Assembly, a rare example in Australia of parliament exercising its power to charge and imprison.

Brian Easton reportedly claimed in evidence to the Marks Royal Commission that Penny had disclosed to him "that she was having an affair with a Liberal Member of Parliament." Although the MP was never named, speculation centred on Richard Court and Ross Lightfoot, although both strongly rejected the allegation (Kapel 1997).

To say that Ross Lightfoot had an eventful life before he became a Senator would be something of an understatement. Many Liberals at the time saw him as an embarrassment, including fellow WA Senator Ian Campbell, who represented the more moderate factions of the party and "spent considerable energy trying to oust him" (Egan 2002b). But there is no doubt that, for all the odium and criticism he drew, that he



represented the views at the time of many rural conservatives in Western Australia. On entering the Senate in 1997 Lightfoot in no way ameliorated or softened his views or his methods, as the discussions to follow in this case study will reveal. As one journalist put it at the time, with unerring prophecy, “Far preferable it would be to dismiss him as a colourful and outspoken character; a ranting uncle; a silly old fool. Not this time. Ross Lightfoot is far from a benign figure who can be safely granted indulgence” (Shannon 1997).

**Barnaby Joyce.** By comparison to Lightfoot, Barnaby Joyce’s pre-Senate life was somewhat more conventional, but interesting nonetheless. He was born in country New South Wales, at Tamworth in 1967, into a family of six children. His father had earlier come from New Zealand on a scholarship, met Joyce’s mother while at Sydney University, and the couple settled down as farmers near the tiny town of Danglemah.

The remote farming life provided Joyce, it appears, with a happy childhood, experiences which later in life were to influenced his strong advocacy for rural communities:

It's a very sort of rugged place, it was remote... There were a lot of people used to come and visit us and say, 'This is ridiculous! No one lives here', and turn around and go back... I thought it was wonderful – a big family, six kids... a lot of work – once it became obvious that you could do something useful around the place, you did: mustering sheep, cattle, fencing... There's a great sense of peace you get out of working out where there's no one else around – just yourself and your thoughts – and that you're creating food, and clothes for people... your efforts are for a good purpose – they feed people. (Joyce in Fidler 2006)

Later, Joyce’s parents sent him to Riverview, the exclusive Catholic boarding school in Sydney. Of this experience, he said, “It helped me in many ways. I was good at rugby, I made friends, but I knew that I was not that kind of person. I didn’t have much in common with that privileged class of people. It will help me get in the Canberra groove but really, the Liberals remind me of Riverview” (in Koutsoukis 2005).

This view of his Coalition partners and also of some of his colleagues in the Nationals – as either out of touch elitists or sycophants, or often both – reoccurs as a consistent

theme in his political utterings: “To tell you the truth, I have never really liked Liberals very much. They all think they have something special happening in their lunchbox” (Joyce in Koutsoukis 2005). To further illustrate, in 2005 just prior to taking up his Senate seat, he described the then Communications Minister, Helen Coonan, as “typical of that Liberal elite from Sydney’s eastern suburbs whose main view of the world is the harbour. Just completely out of touch with working rural Australia,” and of Ron Boswall, a fellow National Senator from Queensland as, “a lost cause ... Bosi’s way of doing things are over I’m afraid. We can’t afford to run around like puppy dogs panting that we get things done ‘because I’m friends with John Howard’. Country people want to see a little more muscle” (Joyce in Koutsoukis 2005).

On leaving school, Joyce studied finance at the University of New England in Armidale and after graduating in 1989 travelled through northern NSW and Queensland working at times as a farmer, a nightclub bouncer in Moree and later as a banker in Charleville in 1994, where he obtaining professional accounting qualifications from the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, of which he is a Fellow. In 1997 with his accounting qualifications secured he moved his family to the cotton growing town of St George in Queensland to establish a private accountancy practice, which he ran until he entered the Senate on 1 July 2005.

According to Koutsoukis (2005) Barnaby Joyce always “hankered for a life in politics.” He joined the National Party in 1995 while at Charleville, and immediately became involved with the organisational wing of the party. His accounting and business skills were keenly sought and he was variously the party’s treasurer, and member of its federal council and state management committees. He ran unsuccessfully on the Nationals Senate tickets at the 1998 and 2001 elections. In 2004 he ran again, this time at the head of the ticket, and prevailed.

Joyce is a committed Catholic who is strongly against abortion, embryonic stem cell research and gay marriage. He opposes the death penalty and supports equity in legal rights, campaigning for the fair trial and return of Guantanamo Bay inmate David Hicks (Fidler 2006). He worked in a voluntary basis with St Vincent de Paul for sixteen years as a counsellor and supporter of domestic violence victims and deprived families. His family has a strong military tradition, with his grandfather a Gallipoli and Second

World War veteran, while his father served and was wounded in the Second World War. Joyce served in the Army Reserve for over eight years.

In many ways, Joyce holds similar values to Bob Katter, and to a lesser extent Ross Lightfoot, particularly when it comes to agricultural protection, drought and economic assistance for primary producers and regulations to protect rural businesses. The three can loosely be considered right of centre-right, agrarian and regional in outlook. Like Katter, Joyce draws inspiration from Joh Bjelke-Peterson and has “a one-eyed, northern view of federal politics” (Cameron 2008). As one commentator further noted, “He is either praised as likeable, smart, principled and refreshingly honest, or criticised as an agrarian socialist pumped up on wacky ideas” (Gordon 2008a).

When questioned on his views, Joyce says “People talk about ‘agrarian socialism’; it’s a term, what does it mean? Maybe I’m an agrarian socialist, I don’t know; is there a problem with being an agrarian socialist? They denigrate you with it like you’re a leper. If that’s what I am, that’s what I am” (in Funnell 2005). Katter and Joyce also share a similar opinion of the National Party, particularly its relationship with the Liberals and its role in the Coalition; but whereas Katter felt he could not reconcile his differences and departed, Joyce has stayed and wants to “help rebuild” the party:

People say I’m a maverick. Wrong. A maverick is someone who represents himself – not a constituency. Anyone who thinks I am going to become an independent like Bob Katter has completely misread me. I have not joined the Nationals to tear them down. I am passionate about this party and the conservative Coalition, and I am going to help rebuild the National Party by standing up for the things our supporters – working rural people – believe in.  
(Joyce in Koutsoukis 2005)

**Summary.** These two Senators, although many would put them in a similar place on the left-right spectrum of political and economic beliefs, are nonetheless quite different in character and apparent motivation. Lightfoot, in 1997, was appointed to the Senate late in his working life, contested and won the 2001 election, then retired after one full term just a few months shy of his seventy-second birthday. His reputation was one of a spoiler, who appeared not to care who he upset, and who used his elevation to the Senate as an opportunity to continue to prosecute his already well-expressed opinions. For example, within a few months of taking office he told the Senate that “Aborigines

were never civilised. Even in their primitive state today the Aborigines are only the bottom colour of the civilisation spectrum” (O'Brien 2007). Following a public outcry, he attempted to defuse the issue by explaining that he was referring to Aborigines "in their native state" until a dressing down from John Howard yielded an announcement from the Prime Minister that Senator Lightfoot “no longer holds those views” (Shannon 1997). But he did, as his subsequent ten years as a Senator shows.

Barnaby Joyce came to the Senate a man 30 years younger with not quite the same notoriety, but nonetheless a reputation for stubbornness and strongly held views. One aspect that distinguishes him from Lightfoot is that he is more party-focussed, more altruistic perhaps, in that he believes in the importance of his party and wants to mould it to his ideals. Joyce is ostensibly more pragmatic and tactical too. For instance, prior to his election he campaigned on a platform opposing the sell-off of Telstra, which gave him “massive publicity” in Queensland (O'Brien 2005), and without his election (which was unexpected) the Coalition would not have controlled the Senate. During the debate he behaved similarly to Bob Katter in threatening not to vote for the legislation and holding out for an assistance package for regional areas. In the end, he voted for the sale.

Where Lightfoot and Joyce are the furthest apart, it will be shown, is in their differing attitude to a political career, policy influence and promotion. Where Lightfoot had little interest in power or influence within his party, and was never seriously considered for a ministerial or other senior position, Joyce has actively pursued influence and promotion within his party's ranks. Lightfoot could be considered a “oncer” who realistically only had one full term and therefore could be as maverick as he liked. Joyce, on the other hand, appears to want both – a maverick persona and a political leadership career.

However, there is one characteristic where Joyce and Lightfoot are alike, a characteristic which they share with Quick, Georgiou and Katter – they did not come to Canberra intimidated by their surroundings. They made their mark from the start, creating events rather than reacting to them.

## **5.2 Research Question 1**

*Are Mavericks electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents?*

In the House of Representatives case study, testing of these two propositions centred around proving a “campaign effect”, defined as an alignment between the candidate’s issue agenda and the problem concerns of the voter. The work of writers such as Louw (2005), Krosnick and Brannon (1993), Krosnick and Kinder (1990) and MacDonald et. al. (1991) was relied on to form the view that voters look for candidates who can best “fix” their problems or concerns. Voters, it was argued, are not rational in their decision making meaning that they are susceptible to framing of issues by candidates who compete to “market” the issues they “own”.

Subsequently, Petrocik’s (1996) theory of issue ownership, where he argues that issues are specific to candidates, and that voters will support the candidate with the perceived best reputation for handling those issues, was used as a framework to test this question in the preceding case study. It is valid to adopt it again here, although the voting system used to elect senators means that its application will be somewhat different.

**Senate electoral system.** Currently, the Senate comprises twelve Senators from each of the six states and two each from the two territories – 76 Senators in total. The 72 state Senators are elected for six year terms, usually meaning “half-Senate” elections are held with each general, that is House of Representative, election which occur every three years. With the exception of a double dissolution, there is no requirement that half-Senate elections occur at the same time as House elections, however governments generally seek to ensure the election cycles are aligned so that both are held together. The four Senators from the territories are elected for three year terms, and face the polls at every general election (see Palmer 2009).

Proportional representation, or single transferable vote (STV), has been used for Senate elections since 1949. When first introduced, candidates were listed in party groups with voters required to record a full expression of preferences; that is, to number all the candidates on the ballot paper consecutively, without error, repetition or omission. Reform was proposed in 1984. The major motivation was to reduce, what was seen at the time as, the high proportion of invalid votes; in Senate elections in the 1970s the informal voting rate was around ten percent. The Hawke government established the Joint Select Committee on Electoral Reform which made many recommendations, the most relevant to discussions here – the “most radical” according to Farrell and McAllister (2005, p.44) – was to give the voter the option of expressing just one

preference for a party ticket instead of the “laborious task” of having to rank-order all the candidates on the ballot paper. This has become known in Australia as “above-the-line” voting and now around 95 percent of voters express their Senate vote in this way (Green 2004).

A consequence may have been to simplify the act of voting but it has also, in effect, turned Senate elections into “by default a closed party list system” (Sawer 2004, p.2). It is contended here, therefore, that the Senate hopefuls must define their campaign effect in terms of the problems and concerns of their party pre-selection committee members as much as the voters at large. This is because it is elements of the party membership, often just a few dozen or even fewer people, who determine the party Senate ticket, and not the voting public.

To succeed in a Senate election, a candidate must receive a quota of votes. Because of the predominance of list voting it is essential, from the individual candidate’s viewpoint, to hold a place on the ticket as high as possible: with the major parties, either the number one or two spots, as these positions are almost certain of election. This is because, in a half-Senate election where six senators are elected in each state, the partisan prevalence of Australian electors invariably splits the vote between the major parties fairly evenly. Consequently, the two major parties will each receive at least two quotas (28.6 percent) electing the top two candidates on their lists, thereby filling four of the six seats available. The number three candidates on the major party lists must fight it out with minor parties and independents for the final two seats. Any further down the list than third means election is extremely difficult.

A further, and relevant, feature of the Senate list voting system is that preferences play an important role in how quotas are filled. Prior to the election, along with the candidate list, the party must also lodge a “group voting ticket” with the Australian Electoral Commission. During the preference distribution, as candidates are eliminated, the AEC will automatically allocate votes in the predetermined order outlined in the group voting tickets. The direction of preference flows is thus effectively determined by the political parties and has a significant impact on how the fifth and sixth Senate seats in each state are eventually allocated. The preference “deals” done by the major and minor parties is crucial; it is now common for minor parties and independents to determine election outcomes via their preferences.

This background is important because it helps explain how Joyce and Lightfoot became Senators, and became known as mavericks. Intuitively, because of the need to impress the party members responsible for pre-selection, prospective Senators should be party loyalists and not mavericks. And generally they are – it could be argued that a Senator's job, as the price for gaining favourable pre-selection – is to defend the party line in unpalatable situations because, unlike their House of Representative colleagues, they do not have a constituency to directly answer to. And they also receive a six year term.

But Joyce and Lightfoot do not fit this mould. Both found that they needed to differentiate themselves from the Coalition party line and go down a maverick path.

**Barnaby Joyce.** The contention is that Barnaby Joyce, from his earliest decision to embark on a political career, sought to clearly define his policy agenda in terms of what he perceived his constituents wanted, and to own and frame those issues to his advantage, if necessary despite the official party line. He has done this while remaining a National Party candidate, but framed in terms of his re-birthing of the party, of re-defining the party on his terms. In other words, Joyce recognised that the coalition of the Nationals with the Liberals no longer reflected the values of the traditional National Party membership, and that to maximise his electoral prospects he needed to distinguish his issues agenda from that of the Coalition.

It is a fact that the National Party's vote is in decline. In the 1987 Federal election, the Nationals received 11.5 percent of the Australia-wide primary vote, reducing at every election to just 5.5 percent by the 2007 ballot. At the 2010 election, the Nationals received 3.7 percent of the total vote, plus six of the 15 Coalition seats in Queensland (where the Coalition stood candidates under a joint Liberal National Party banner). In the discussion on Bob Katter's motivation in leaving the Nationals to become an independent, Costar and Curtin's (2004, p. 9) observation, that the major political parties have largely abandoned their post-war policies of subsidies and hand-outs to the regions, is pertinent because it means many of the National's core constituents have lost faith in the party.

Barnaby Joyce understands that traditional National Party voters have a declining motivation to vote for the party, as is evidenced by the success of Katter and the "picking off" of National-held seats by pro-regional independents, such as Tony

Windsor and Rob Oakeshott. The National Party itself is not oblivious to this trend and there is a growing call from within to abandon the Liberal Coalition. For example, on election night at the 2009 state election in Western Australia, when it became apparent that neither Labor or the Liberals would hold a majority of seats, the Nationals' leader, Brendan Grylls, in an interview gave very clear signals that his support for the Liberals was not to be assumed. He called Karlene Maywald, the Nationals MP (then) sitting in the South Australian Labor cabinet an "inspiration", and said he would be seeking her advice. As it turned out, the Nationals did side with the Liberals in Western Australia, but the fact that the party could publically float an option where it might support Labor is a sign that the old Coalition is crumbling.

For the Nationals it is a need to adapt to survive. Their negotiations in Western Australia reflect what is being considered federally: that they might become a stand-alone party. The Federal leader, Warren Truss, is on record for thinking just that following the loss of the lower-house division of Lyne in 2008 to high-profile independent Robert Oakeshott, after being a National Party seat for almost 60 years.:

I would prefer that the National Party is involved in supporting a Liberal government but if the Liberals are not prepared to deliver what the Nationals want, well then they will have to wear the consequences of that. (Truss in AAP 2008)

The cause of the National's decline, as Megalogenis and Elks (2008) points out, is largely due to population shifts undermining its traditional voter heartlands, the farming regions and coastal retirement centres of New South Wales and Queensland. Labor is becoming the party of choice on the coast as interstate migrants from the southern cities dilute the National-supporting locals, while independents are taking over the inland as they are seen to better represent "traditional" rural values. This demographic and seachange "population pincer", as Megalogenis and Elks (2008) call it, means that the Nationals are in danger either way – whether they merge with the Liberals or remain as a separate entity.

But demographics is not the only cause of problems for the Nationals; they also face a "slow, declining death", as former leader John Anderson asserts (in Lewis 2008), because their original reason for being no longer exists. The formation of two parties on the conservative side of politics historically reflected the shared interests of two



sections of Australian business, manufacturing and rural, and on their opposition to organised labour and its political representation, the ALP. In recent years the reasons for the Liberals and the Nationals to remain together have diminished: farming has become an international business where technology has allowed huge land holdings to be run by corporations, swallowing up smaller, family farms; while unionised labour has largely been dismantled, somewhat ironically not by the conservatives, but largely by the Labor Party.

Joyce is in a similar position to that of Bob Katter who, in the mid 1990s when he decided to become an independent, had wide-spread support from the party membership. As one contributor to a newspaper said:

The National Party really only have themselves to blame for their current position. They spent 11 years in government doing little more than providing a majority for the Howard Liberal party and failing to represent their electorates. Nobody ever really stood up to the Liberals on a substantive issue that would have aided the country folk this party supposedly represented. While I am sure there will be many people who decry my simplistic analysis, many of my country relatives feel that way too; there is just a feeling in the bush that the Nationals have failed to live up to their historic role. (in Megalogenis and Elks 2008)

So National Party supporters are dwindling, and those that do exist feel let down by the party. This is the vacuum into which Joyce has stepped. He has recognised that the Nationals cannot survive under these circumstances, and it is apparent he is attempting to redefine the party in terms of the values of its traditional, rural supporters, with the hope that the leadership and organisation will follow his lead. Joyce will tread his maverick path and still remain a member of his party because, he hopes, he is more in-tune with the views of party supporters than the party hierarchy who have to defend the Coalition line.

This discussion supports the propositions under review here, that voters identify with the issue agenda of the maverick, and that the maverick owns the issues important to the voters. But Joyce had a difficulty to overcome before he could even become a Senator, a triumph which established his credentials with his voters.

The problem Joyce had when he faced election in 2004 was that the Coalition partners in Queensland did not field a joint ticket, as they did in other states. In New South Wales, for example, the Nationals and the Liberals generally come to an agreement before each election whereby the two parties rotate places in the top three spots on the one ticket. But in Queensland, where the Liberals and the Nationals have a history of acrimony, the two conservative parties fielded separate teams (although for the 2007 election, it was a joint ticket). Joyce headed the National's ticket, but it was generally thought before the election that the Nationals would struggle to get him elected. It was considered that if three Coalition seats were to be won, then they would all go to the Liberals, leaving One Nation, the Greens, Family First and perhaps Barnaby Joyce to fight out for the seat held by One Nation's Len Harris.

Joyce campaigned hard for the election, with a media strategy focussing on him personally, concentrating his message on opposing the sale of Telstra, while the official Coalition policy was to support the sale. It transpired that the Nationals won 6.6 percent of the vote on first preferences, well short of a quota, but managed to get Joyce elected through the flow of second preferences from the eliminated candidates of micro-parties, and more major vote-getters in Family First, Len Harris and Pauline Hanson (who was standing as an independent). In fact, Joyce ended up winning the fifth seat rather than sixth, overtaking the Liberals due to the considerable number of Pauline Hanson's below-the-line votes that favoured the Nationals ahead of the Liberals (Bowe 2004).

This is not to imply that Barnaby Joyce turned himself into a wildly popular politician with the broader Queensland population, after all as noted above, support for the Nationals was close to terminal decline; he won his seat with less than half a quota on first preferences, and after a 2.6 percent swing against the Nationals from the previous election (Brenton 2005, p. 1). But that is not the point: the 2004 result demonstrates, first, Joyce's ability to pick issues important to his core voters – enough voters to get him elected – and to frame them in terms favourable to his campaign, even if at odds with the party; and second, an ability to represent issues important to minor parties and independents, particularly the Fishing Party (Joyce promised to oppose restrictions on fishing in the Great Barrier Reef) and Pauline Hanson supporters. Just as the House of Representative mavericks did not attempt to be all things to all voters, either did Joyce.

He focused on one class of voter and ensured they knew of his policies and that he owned those issues.

For the 2010 election, the Liberals and the Nationals fielded a joint ticket as in other states, on which Joyce secured the second position, and was therefore re-elected. He had, however, threatened to quit during the preselection, and stand as an independent, if he was not given one of the top two spots (Viellaris et al. 2008). This demonstrates Joyce's ability to "play the party game" and please the party preselectors.

**Ross Lightfoot.** There are some parallels with Joyce's Senate tilt in 2004 to the situation in which Ross Lightfoot's found himself three years earlier at the 2001 general election. Lightfoot also was a member of a Coalition partner, in his case the Liberals, and like Joyce found that some party supporters felt disenfranchised by the mainstream, centralist, urban-based policies of the Coalition. Both Joyce and Lightfoot embodied the country constituents of their respective states; they were as far removed geographically as is possible from Canberra, becoming conduits for rural frustrations over issues such as gun control, the lack of government services and the effects of globalisation.

Lightfoot, probably more than Joyce, owes his political success to skilfully aligning his views to those held by a conservative section of his party to ensure his pre-selection to a winnable place on the ticket, and to courting right-wing minor parties to gain their preferences on the Senate group tickets.

Lightfoot had been previously appointed to the Senate in 1997 "on the back of a factional brawl" (Hawthorne 2005) upon the death of a sitting member, John Panizza. The nomination divided his colleagues; sections of the Liberal Party made every effort to prevent Lightfoot winning endorsement at one point having his election declared invalid on a technicality, but Lightfoot's hold over the party membership prevailed and the protest failed. He did this by forming close relationships with the party at branch level, or perhaps as one commentator colourfully saw it, he was "a right wing death beast from the Wild West who made a motza in minerals and then devoted his life to public service – and branch stacking" (Kerr 2005b). During the mid-1990s the League of Rights still had influence and sympathisers within the WA Liberal Party, and this was sufficient to support Lightfoot's appointment.

So by the time the 2001 election came around he had been a Senator for four years. During that time the fears of his opponents had, in their eyes, been realised as he became a somewhat notorious figure. The ABC's PM television program (ABC-TV 2001) described Lightfoot thus in the build-up to the campaign: "He's a strongman of right-wing politics in the West, a headline-grabbing good old boy, a political maverick known to his supporters as a fierce advocate for the West and to his critics as an articulate but dangerous red neck." And in response, Lightfoot replied, "Well, I'm not paid to feel comfortable. People pay me, the taxpayer pays me, to get their message across. To express their concern, to amplify their fears and that's what I do" (Lightfoot on ABC-TV 2001).

A group of Lightfoot's peers, including Senator Ian Campbell and others of the centre-right, were behind an "unsuccessful push" to oust him altogether from the Senate ticket (Egan 2002a). Some of his more infamous actions during this four year term included: stating in parliament that Aboriginal people were "the lowest colour on the civilisation spectrum" (which the Federal Court later found breached the Racial Discrimination Act); describing Boat People as "disease-ridden criminals"; wanting to bring displaced white, but not black, Zimbabwe farmers to Western Australia; and supporting the succession of Western Australia from the Commonwealth (O'Brien 2007).

Given the level of angst he had caused within his own party, his first task in 2001 was to secure a winnable spot on the Liberal Senate ticket. The influence of the far-right within the Western Australian Liberals had been steadily diminishing with the League of Rights all-but disappearing. This led to the more conservative views in the community switching from the Liberals (and also from the Nationals) to a new political force in Australian politics, the Pauline Hanson-lead One Nation Party. There was a period early in 2001 when Lightfoot flirted with the idea of leaving the Liberals and running for One Nation, and certainly One Nation was keen to have him (ABC-Radio 2001). But that move was likely a tactic by Lightfoot to pressure the Liberals to endorse him, as he fought a factional battle to gain the number three ticket position from sitting Senator, Winston Crane. The number one spot had already been secured by another incumbent, Dr Alan Eggleston, while Liberal state president, David Johnston had caused a degree of consternation with Lightfoot by garnering enough internal support for the second spot.

In the wake of Johnston's success, Lightfoot claimed "bitter factionalism could destroy the Liberals" and also (apparently without a hint of intended irony) that "some in the party appear determined to oust him" (ABC-Radio 2001). He used the media to attack the Liberal Party, which further establish his maverick credentials, but more importantly aligned him with the remaining conservative elements in his party (ABC-Radio 2001). In public, he consistently refused to deny the rumours that he was considering leaving the Liberals.

You know I've been very privileged to represent Western Australia in the federal Parliament for the past four odd years and I'll take that with me if I'm not re-elected. However, the thought [to join another party] obviously crosses your mind, but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. (ABC-Radio 2001)

He strategically aligned himself with One Nation in order to gain as many preferences as possible from One Nation below-the-line voters. An "assiduous campaign to cultivate Pauline Hanson" as one newspaper journalist wrote at the time (Schubert 2005). Of the eventual One Nation's Senate candidate, the Labor defector Graeme Campbell, Lightfoot said, "I suppose if anyone's going to beat me, I would prefer it to be Graeme rather than some limp-wristed, hollow-chested, follow-the-rules-of-the-eastern-states people" (AAP 2005a).

Ross Lightfoot did secure the number three spot on the Liberal's Senate ticket, a decision unsuccessfully appealed by Winston Cane (Miragliotta and Sharman 2002, p. 200) and went on to be elected on One Nation preferences when Campbell was eliminated from the count. But he had to overcome solid opposition, being shunned by many of the other parties as a consequence of his pro-One Nation views (Miragliotta and Sharman 2002, p. 2001). The liberals for forests, the National Party, the Democrats, the Labor Party and the Greens all discriminated against him in their preference decisions by placing him after his Liberal running mates in a bid to prevent his re-election (Miragliotta and Sharman 2002, p. 2001). However, the decision of One Nation to favour Lightfoot in their preference allocation had the effect of neutralising the tactics of other parties to defeat him. After the election, a One Nation spokesperson is recorded as saying, "He's gone out of his way to support us, I think at the end of the day we have returned the favour" (ABC-TV 2006). As one commentator noted:

The flirtation by the West Australian Liberals with the extremist One Nation party in 2001 may have been risky, but the man leading the romancing knew what he was doing. The silver-haired, flamboyant Ross Lightfoot courted Pauline Hanson like a suitor and, as a reward, was elected on her party's preferences. (Egan 2002b)

The claim here is that Ross Lightfoot was adept at aligning his policy agenda with the policy agendas of the people that could most influence his election: conservative sections of the Liberal Party organisational arm, and minor parties from whom he could extract preference deals. That is not to say Lightfoot was exclusively tactical and did not honestly hold the views he did; rather, that he was skilled at focussing on those who had influence and ensuring that they understood his message, and that he framed issues of mutual importance in terms that they could identify with.

However, Lightfoot was unable to maintain his standing in the party and he failed to gain favourable pre-selection for the 2007 election. He in no way modified his views – there were many controversial moments during his term post-2001, as the discussions to come in this case study will show – but by 2007 the mood in the country had moved on. Hard-right minor parties had lost much of their influence, support for Lightfoot's brand of rural conservatism was waning even in the West, and the Australian public had shifted more to the centre-left. The 2001 election had been largely defined by the terrorist attacks in the Twin Towers in New York, and on the Tampa asylum seekers, an issue set that had favoured John Howard's more centre-right conservatism (Henderson 2003); by 2007, Labor's Kevin Rudd was in ascendancy and the nation was more concerned with issues such as climate change and Aboriginal reconciliation.

So Ross Lightfoot, in effect, lost his constituency and decided not to contest the 2007 election, which meant he retired from politics when his term expired on 30 June 2008.

**Summary.** The purpose here has been to test if the maverick is better than the party in two key areas: that voters know more of the maverick's message than the party's; and that the maverick is better at owning and framing salient issues than the party. Petrocik (1996) noted a "campaign effect" in successful issue ownership, and it is this that the above discussion has sought to confirm.

The conclusion is that Research Question 1 is supported. An examination of both Senators' elections shows that they successfully aligned their issue agendas with a clearly identified constituency. They certainly did not toe the party line when it did not suit them and they were happy to go the maverick path if it meant a closer identity with their constituents. It was noted that Senators have a different constituency to lower house members who must answer directly to the voter *en masse*: a Senator's constituent is from a narrower group, as often as not a party member who makes the decision over pre-selection or preference deals.

Both Barnaby Joyce and Ross Lightfoot benefitted from high media and public recognition – even notoriety in Lightfoot's case – and for both their policy positions were well known because they invited media attention and reporting (as the discussion to follow will show). Their messages were specific and focussed and they did not attempt to be “mainstream” politicians: they targeted their messages to the voters that mattered. They were happy to eschew the party line if it suited their campaigns, and were not concerned if their messages were at odds with “mainstream” voters. To the maverick, it is their constituents that matter more than the party.

Lightfoot and Joyce are adept at framing issues to their advantage, and to present themselves as “champions” of their respective causes. Petrocik's central hypothesis is therefore confirmed: issue emphasis is specific to candidates and voters support candidates based on the candidate's ability to competently “handle” those issues (Petrocik 1996, p. 825).

### **5.3 Research Question 2**

*Is one explanation for maverick success that the maverick is a more accomplished communicator than the party loyalist - better at “conviction politics” and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of “celebrityhood”?*

The Chapter 2 discussion, in establishing this research question, considered how a politician communicates a message in modern Australian politics. It showed that the voters perceive the notion of “trust” in their politicians somewhat differently to trust in its everyday connotation: they differentiate between an expectation that a particular politician might deal with the truth lightly from an expectation that that politician will deliver on his or her promises – the so-called conviction politician. Voters, it is

contended, appear to agree with O'Hara (2004, p. 276) that perceptions of trustworthiness is rarely a factor to swing an election. In this context it is more the notion of "conviction" than honesty, "believability" than trust, that voters look for. Something close to what Uhr (2007, p. 48-49) calls the "terms of trust" which he measures as politicians having the credibility and conviction to do what the community want.

To establish these conviction credentials, the modern Australian politician turns more to "star power" (t Hart and Tindall 2009, p.4), using the "artefacts, icons and expertise" of popular culture to bring "celebrityhood" into their campaigns (Street 2004, p. 437). Broadly, the conclusion was that voters are much more concerned with ends rather than means, and much more interested in celebrity than in politics.

Consequently, voters might not prefer candidates who occupy the high moral ground; rather the ones that appear to stand by their convictions and "stick to their guns" (Skapinker 2008). That is probably just as well for Ross Lightfoot, as he took the "guns" metaphor much more literally than surely Skapinker intended.

**Ross Lightfoot.** Lightfoot's Senate career was punctuated by "a string of scandals" surrounding his motives, his honesty and his probity (O'Brien 2007). Prominent themes were that he failed to properly disclose his personal share trading to parliament; that he used his position as a parliamentarian to further his own financial interests; and that he failed to make proper disclosures of business involvements.

On this latter point, controversial dealings in mining stocks and mining companies were a feature of Lightfoot's stints in both state and federal parliament. It is through his association with the mining industry that he leaves his most lasting imprint on Australian politics, the one which ordinary Australians would see as Ross Lightfoot's legacy: in March 2005, a photograph splashed across the newspaper front pages and the six o'clock television news bulletins of him brandishing an AK-47 machine gun in the company of troops of the Iraqi National Guard. That photograph became the symbol for allegations he was involved in insider trading of Woodside Petroleum shares, illegally carrying weapons, bribing foreign officials, smuggling money out of Australia and undertaking commercial activities on behalf of Woodside – all during a taxpayer-funded trip to Iraq.



The events that led to “Ross of the Desert” (as dubbed by Kelly 2005) finding himself in such a position – “something that read like a Boy’s Own Adventure” according to one journalist (Schubert 2005) – captivated the Australian press and public. Even the prime minister at the time, John Howard, confessed to “a feeling of wonderment” on watching television accounts of the story: “I must say I held my cup of tea at my lips as I saw the news; I did not immediately consume it ... I thought, this is going to be an interesting day” (Howard in Dodson 2005b).



Figure 5.1 Ross Lightfoot posing with Iraqi soldiers, January 2005  
(Butterly 2005)

It is difficult to know where the story really begins. Lightfoot at some stage in the early 2000s struck up a friendship with a Professor Robert Amin, Director of Curtin University’s Woodside Hydrocarbon Research Facility, an organisation as the name suggests supported by the Woodside Petroleum corporation, Australia’s biggest oil company. In 2003, Woodside began a two-year study to find oil and gas reserves around Kirkuk in Kurdistan. Also in 2003, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Jalal Talabani (who went on to become Iraqi’s president following the US lead invasion) visited Australia, accompanied by a Mr Jalal Aziz and family. Ross Lightfoot helped organise the visit, and Mr Talabani and Mr Aziz met with him in Perth reportedly to thank him for his help (Skelton 2005). Then in July 2004 Lightfoot went

to Iraq with Professor Amin - the trip paid for by Woodside (or at least by Amin with money from his Woodside-funded Curtin research unit) - where a memorandum of understanding between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Woodside regarding oil exploration was signed. It was also signed by Lightfoot as an “attendee” (ABC-Radio 2005c).

The July 2004 visit did attract some media attention in Australia. In November 2004 Lightfoot was interviewed on ABC television’s PM program where he disclosed that the trip was paid for by Woodside. He faced questioning over his interest in Kurdistan, and over the probity of an Australian politician, without the imprimatur or knowledge of the Australian government, seemingly acting as an agent of a private company in a foreign country. He said this:

Well, it’s an odd thing, but as a student of history I have marvelled at the survival of the Kurds – their tenacity, their difference, their ethnic difference, their moral difference, their religious tolerance. I want to do something, you know, towards the latter end of my career – I’ve been in politics spanning 18, 19 years now – that was worthwhile, and the Kurds have always appealed to me as people that need assisting. (ABC-TV 2005e)

Also in November 2004 Lightfoot purchased 875 Woodside shares.

In January 2005 Lightfoot returned to Iraq and Kurdistan, this time on a taxpayer-funded study tour on the understanding he was there to observe Iraq's first democratic election, which was set for 30 January. He travelled via Dubai where he was joined by Simko Hamlet, an Australian citizen who was at the time the Kurdish Regional Government’s representative in Australia. The two then travelled together to Iraq and reportedly stayed in the town of Sulaymaniyah in Kurdistan where Woodside was conducting drilling tests (Hogan 2005).

From this point, accounts of events become contested. The News Limited’s newspapers broke the story on 17 March (Butterly 2005) that contained the now infamous front page picture of Lightfoot brandishing the machine gun. The story revealed Lightfoot’s Iraq visit in January, and claimed he smuggled \$US20,000 in cash into Iraq on behalf of Woodside Energy.

Ross Lightfoot was not shy about how a US\$20,000 donation to a run-down hospital was taken into Iraq when I first spoke to him on Tuesday. ‘We stitched it into our jackets,’ he told me... I was surprised he volunteered this information... (Butterly 2005)

Lightfoot was forced by the Prime Minister to issue an explanation in parliament. He denied that he handled the money himself (threatening to sue News Ltd) or knew anything about it until he was at the meeting with the Kurdistan Prime Minister, but he did concede that the donation was made by his travelling companion, Simko Hamlet, on behalf of Woodside (Lightfoot 2005). He also admitted that Professor Amin had telephoned him from Australia and that he had told Amin that the “Woodside donation had been presented to Prime Minister Fatah...” (Schubert 2005). As the story broke, Lightfoot sold all his Woodside shares for a substantial profit (Grattan 2005b).

The suggestions in the media was that Lightfoot smuggled money into a foreign country, carried a .38 calibre pistol with him (“If someone was going to shoot me, I was going to shoot back ...”) and bribed a Turkish border official to ease his departure (Hogan 2005). He was also accused of failing to declare a pecuniary interest in the Woodside-funded centre at Curtin University, the insulation being that his relationship with Woodside and was not proper.

John Howard told parliament on 17 March 2005 “My party is composed of honourable men and women, and if those honourable men and women deny things, I don’t intend to assume that those denials are untrue, Mr Speaker.” He said Lightfoot’s story was “credible” (Kerr 2005b); hardly an endorsement and not the same as “true”. Lightfoot gave conflicting stories to the ABC’s AM, PM and Lateline programs on that and the next day, and then *The Australian* newspaper (another News Ltd outlet) gave an account of a meeting between its Middle East correspondent and Lightfoot in the Suleimaniyah Palace in Kurdistan.

Lightfoot then announced that he had carried in with him a substantial sum of money from Woodside as a donation for the little hospital in Halabja – the Kurdish border town famous as the site of a devastating chemical attack staged 14 years ago by the Air Force of Saddam Hussein. Did he claim personal credit? His demeanour, if not his words, suggested so. Indeed, he had just made a special visit to hand over in person the money he had brought in:

\$20,000 in cash, and the money was handed over in his presence. “I felt it was the right thing to do,” said the senator, his eyelids at that moment touchingly lowered. I pondered this slightly startling instance of collaboration between a large corporation and a political emissary, and wondered if I should remind the senator just what I did for a living. I formed a mental picture of Woodside’s strategic chief and former Labor Party guru Gary Gray, sitting in his high-rise office, doubtless unaware of this lone parliamentary gunman active in the oil company’s cause on the furthest frontiers of Araby. (Rothwell 2005)

Someone was lying. And either it was Lightfoot – or otherwise nearly everyone else he had spoken to prior to the story becoming public knowledge. According to a Liberal colleague, commenting anonymously to a newspaper after the event, Lightfoot was “a walking disaster” – then added “he’s a decent person” and had “done nothing wrong” (Dodson 2005b). In other words, he was politically inept but he meant well. But is that correct? Did not everything he did as a politician appear to, on deeper probing, have an ulterior motive that benefitted Ross Lightfoot personally? That is what his critics and a good portion of the Australian press believed.

The purpose here is not to pass moral judgment on Lightfoot or to determine the veracity of his version of events, but to present this anecdote and its consequences in the light of the research question under review. The “Ross of the Desert” episode acts as an exemplar of the way Lightfoot behaved throughout his political life; his honesty and integrity were called into question so many times that it surely must have been a factor in how he was judged by the electorate.

Ross Lightfoot’s behaviour as a politician tests to the limit the proposition that conviction matters more than honesty. In Chapter 2 a case was made that voters cared much less than many contemporary writers about the honesty of their politicians. It was asserted that the central position of writers such as Uhr (2007), Goot (2002) and Jaensch (1995), that there is a “crisis of trust” in Australian politics, is largely not supported by the evidence and is something of a narrative fallacy. Voters do not believe their politicians are any worse than they used to be; in fact the evidence is that their trust in politicians is increasing, and they do not necessarily care if their politicians lie – providing they carry strong convictions in their issue agenda.

But that cannot mean that perceptions of trustworthiness do not matter at all. As with many things, it is a matter of degree. Did most journalist and commentators think Ross Lightfoot was a liar? Without doubt. And therefore certainly most Australians did too. As the various episodes of Lightfoot's political life recounted in this case study show, a reputation for using his position as a politician to further his own financial and personal interests followed him for all of his political career.

The answer, conceivably, is that a reputation with the wider community as a dangerous, dishonest, self-serving redneck did not matter too much to him. As argued earlier, what mattered to Lightfoot was his standing with the people that could directly affect his political career – his WA-based, hard-right supporters and conservative elements in his party. His notoriety, his playing on the world stage, his thumbing his nose at the “big city” and journalists added to his image rather than detracted from it in the eyes of his supporters. Insofar as “conviction politics” goes, Lightfoot understood the importance to his support base of appearing unflinching on his issue agenda – anti-Aboriginal welfare, anti-immigration, pro-rural interests – and there is no evidence that he ever resiled publically from these. The image he liked to portray was that of a “tough guy” who could handle himself, who loved a scrap – so his exploits with AK-47s and currency smuggling, arguably, to those that mattered only enhanced his aura as someone of “conviction”.

Senator Lightfoot has sometimes been described as one of the most “outspoken and gun toting” Senators. Sometimes referred to as “extreme”, he has never made any apologies for his convictions and has always voiced them strongly. (Coonan 2008)

This is where Popkin's (1994) theory of “low information rationality” can be applied. People take short-cuts in making decisions: those who saw Lightfoot as a conviction politician, and liked him for it, when news items appeared that presented him as assertive, brave, adventurous – even romantic, then their confirmation bias validated their view of him as a conviction politician. Others, no-doubt the majority, with a different pre-conceived opinion of Lightfoot, perhaps as a liar, bore and aggressive opportunist, also had their biases confirmed by the same information and images.

In this way Lightfoot is something of a celebrity politician too. His critics believed that his ego would not let him pass up the opportunity for a “little notoriety” (Hawthorne

2005), and more than one journalist thought that his love of the spotlight and his need for recognition were behind him landing in so much controversy over his Iraq “adventure”. The argument is that he may not have personally smuggle the money, but when speaking about it to journalists could not help embellishing his role to enhance his celebrity status. Seccombe (2005), tongue-in-cheek, believed that the most creditable explanation was what he described as the “sartorial alibi.”

How could anyone, asked a woman close to the obsessively neat senator, believe he would smuggle \$US20,000 cash in the lining of his suit coat? “He won’t even carry car keys because they ruin the line,” she said. Ross Lightfoot is not the sort of bloke to ruin the hang of his Zegna with wads of greenbacks. We’re betting that the stories about the coat were, pardon the pun, embroidered. (Seccombe 2005)

The joke aside, Seccombe’s point is that Lightfoot is the sort of person to overstate his part in the story simply because he could not resist it. It fitted too well with the way he liked to frame himself to the public. Kerr (2005a), too, is prepared to doubt that Lightfoot smuggled the money himself, more likely that “it made a good yarn.” And Grattan (2005b) thought Lightfoot “more of a fool than a knave.”

Ross Lightfoot craved the media lime-light and loved the swashbuckling, larger-than-life image that was portrayed. He embraced the cult of personality as much as any celebrity, and was a ready target for a celebrity-obsessed media. He was the archetypical “walking headline” and always good for a comment or a quote, because he did not care who he offended, was often controversial and spoke against the party mantra. As one journalist observed, “With Lightfoot, words are almost always grenades” (Grattan 2005b).

His behaviour and demeanour emanating from the Iraq controversy was no different from his deportment throughout his public life. He did what he liked believing that as long as he played the tough guy to his audience he would survive politically – that had been his *modus operandi* for all of his political career. But the problem for Lightfoot was that by 2005 it was an audience with too narrow a base; he had become a caricature of himself and there were not enough people left who could take him seriously. By the 2007 pre-selection he was a politician without a meaningful constituency.

**Barnaby Joyce.** But the same could not be said for Barnaby Joyce. Whereas Lightfoot, from a policy and issue ownership perspective, stayed in one place while his constituents moved passed, Barnaby Joyce has made an assiduous effort to keep his issue set as closely aligned as possible to a definable voter group. A candidate's campaign is ultimately, as Petrocik (1996, p. 827) asserts, a "marketing effort", and Barnaby Joyce is a much more effective marketer than Ross Lightfoot.

Joyce appears acutely aware that the problems facing voters change with time, as do their values, and has sought to carve out an issue territory that remains relevant. Part of Joyce's motivation is that many voters no longer feel that the National Party represents their issue interests, and Joyce has moved to fill that void. He has affirmed leadership ambitions saying he would one day like to lead the party (Madigan 2009), and if it came along he would "grab it with both hands" (Roberts 2009).

The point has already been made that Joyce has not taken the "accepted" Senator's role of defending the unpopular party line in exchange for a favourable ballot position and six year terms; in fact, he has vowed to differentiate the National Party from Coalition policy with a "strong separate brand" (Fidler 2006). He believes that the future of the Nationals is possibly not in the Coalition, although the parties have amalgamated in Queensland and Joyce has joined up.

In 2005, not long after Joyce took his seat, federal treasurer Peter Costello warned Joyce's dissent threatened to "cannibalise" the government. The cracks in the coalition became visible when Joyce became involved in a reportedly near-physical confrontation with Liberal senator and John Howard loyalist Bill Heffernan during a party room meeting. But this did not harm Joyce in his constituency. A Queensland country council mayor said Joyce had won the respect of the community for sticking to his guns and fighting for the bush (AAP 2005b). In this way, Joyce has put himself forward as the conviction alternative to the Nationals', as his target voters see it, sycophantic support of the Liberals: "We've got to identify ourselves as a product without a shadow of a doubt – differentiate or disappear" (Joyce in Berkovic 2008).

The National Party's *raison d'être* was originally in representing the welfare of rural economies and communities at a time when their interests were different from the city-based manufacturing and retail sectors. However, as the Australian economy started to

be opened up in the 1970s, the differences between the two sections of business became less defined and the political need for separate representation for rural business became less pressing. This lessening need was marked by the name change from the Country to the National Party in 1975. Since then, Coalition and Labor governments alike have both steadily reduced subsidies and assistance to rural Australia. This, coupled with technological and communication advances which have brought the bush much closer to the city, and demographic changes and migration previously discussed, has left the Nationals' core constituents wondering if the party represents them anymore.

This is the vacuum that Barnaby Joyce has made every attempt to occupy – “The Nationals must never be embarrassed or forget where we come from” (Joyce in Cameron 2008) – selling himself staunchly as a candidate of conviction, strongly committed to the values identified by traditional National Party voters. It has previously been noted that Joyce campaigned hard on one such issue, he opposed the sale of Telstra, which helped establish his conviction credentials in the electorate and, arguably, was the key factor that saw him elected against the odds in 2004. This is the same issue that Bob Katter fought on a few years earlier and discussed in the previous case study. Whereas Katter's campaign was against the sale of the second tranche of the Telstra sale, Joyce's was against the third and last.

Paradoxically, it was the Telstra issue that, once elected, called Joyce's conviction credentials into question and highlighted the difficulty the maverick has in maintaining convictions when constrained by the party line. On 14 September 2005, just ten weeks after Joyce took office as a Senator, he voted with the government to sell its remaining ownership of Telstra. He gained “massive publicity” (ABC-TV 2005c) in the lead-up to the vote, publically agonising over his position, initially threatening to oppose the sale, then deciding to support it on the basis of what he said was a generous government package communication services to rural Australia. Then with just days to go before the vote, Joyce had second thoughts, saying again that he would not support the sale. A further twist was on 13 September, the night before the scheduled vote, he went to hospital with chest pains, leading to speculation that the pressure of the situation was effecting his health; but he returned to Parliament House on the 14<sup>th</sup> to announce at the last minute that, yes, he would be supporting the legislation. He told the ABC's 7.30 Report program that night “I hope I have done the right and just thing,” to which the



presenter, Kerry O'Brien responded, "That doesn't exactly sound like a vote of confidence, does it?" (ABC-TV 2005c).

The ensuing persistent questioning at that interview honed in on the perception of Joyce's reneging on his election commitment, a line of questioning that Joyce found uncomfortable and difficult to answer:

O'BRIEN: You told voters at the last election that you opposed the sale of Telstra, but when it came to the crunch you reneged. It's as simple as that, isn't it?

JOYCE: No, it's not. I think everyone has seen the National Party resolution from the last state conference, it was unanimous.

O'BRIEN: That's the conference. We are talking about what you told voters at the last election ... Are you answerable to your state conference or answerable to the pledge you make in an election campaign?

JOYCE: ... we've extracted the largest telecommunication package of all time ...

O'BRIEN: Sorry, Senator Joyce ... people like your constituents, I suspect, don't particularly respect politicians who don't answer straight up and down questions. You went to the last election telling the people you hoped to vote for you that you opposed the sale of Telstra. You have reneged.

JOYCE: No, I don't think that's correct ... What we have now is the biggest communication package ...

O'BRIEN: The issue was the sale of Telstra, not a package that might go with the sale. You said in an interview in August with ABC Radio. Monica Attard – "So how have your constituents reacted so far? Have you been inundated with emails as has been reported?" Barnaby Joyce – "Yes, we have." Monica Attard – "What's the tenor of the emails?" Barnaby Joyce – "The vast majority of them don't want the sale." That's still the case, isn't it?

JOYCE: I agree with that, Kerry, but the unanimous decision from my state conference ...

O'BRIEN: They are not the people who voted for you on the basis that you pledged to them that you would not support the sale of Telstra. (ABC-TV 2005c)

Politics, the cliché goes, is the art of compromise, but the problem for the maverick is that “compromise” is the opposite concept to “conviction”. As the above interview transcript shows, the media, and by extension the voters, prefer the resolute politician over the irresolute. For the maverick without leadership or frontbench career ambitions, the unwavering path is much easier to follow – but Joyce has sought to combine conviction *and* a party career, and at times the two will collide. Without conviction credentials it really becomes difficult to be a maverick, and Joyce’s quest to re-form the National Party with himself at the centre relies on, to a large extent, him being able to project as a maverick to the electorate.

So the 2005 Telstra back-down had the potential to de-rail his political career and therefore his plans for reform of the National Party. But Joyce has been able to put that danger behind him and move on with his maverick persona. He has achieved this in several ways. The first is what might be described as the “*mea culpa*” or the “Peter Beattie” defence. [Queensland Premier Beattie was often referred to as a “Teflon” politician because “mud just would not stick” (Dickie 2004).] The aim is to disarm potential criticism by admitting there was or is a problem, and you either have done or will do the best you can in the situation. Under the logic of this approach, Joyce at first made a mistake by attempting to answer O’Brien by using the party conference ruling as an excuse. He did better elsewhere in the interview when he said, “People have said, ‘How do you feel about it?’ I said, ‘Well, about 65 percent happy.’ Sixty-five percent happy is better than 35 percent happy, which is the alternative” (ABC-TV 2005c).

This is a stronger response: it admits the change of mind, frames it in a positive way, and allows Joyce to appear “human” – life is not always black and white, which is something ordinary voters can relate to. It allowed him to focus on the positives of what he had achieved (a \$2 billion communication package for rural areas) while claiming that he did the best he could in the circumstances. This is better than blaming someone or something else. It is a political tactic he learned to apply in similar situations. For example, later when in opposition in August 2009, Joyce voted with the Coalition to support Labor’s renewable energy targets. He admitted his party was “conceding

ground” by passing the RET bill, but accepted a compromise was needed: “The position, I think, people hold is that we are doing the very best we can out of a bad issue. We're in a far better position than where we were...” (Joyce in Kerr 2009).

To further put the Telstra episode behind him, Joyce continued to concentrate on his maverick image to re-claim conviction status. Sometimes politicians can become type-cast from a few reported incidents or a perceived personality trait – for example, arguably, Ross Lightfoot and the AK-47 picture, or Kim Beazley’s lack of “ticker”, or Belinda Neal and the “Iguana Joe’s scandal” – so Joyce risked being labelled the “Telstra back-flipper”. But he continued to be outspoken on his issues where they clashed with the party’s, crossing the floor to vote against the Coalition more than 20 times since the Telstra vote (Berkovic 2008). This had the effect of diluting his Telstra change of mind and re-affirming his conviction credentials with the public.

Joyce’s main tactic at the time, to cement his conviction image, was to present as an “anti-politics” politician. He recognised that “conventional” politicians were not respected by his disaffected rural constituents, which he reflected by his constant derogation of leaders and ministers in the Coalition (for example, his views on Ron Boswell and Helen Coonan previously discussed) and by presenting himself as a rugged, no-nonsense, every-man, taking on the elites: “I’ll keep on doing the job I was elected to do. I swore an oath of office to do that. If some people in the Liberal Party think I should be a sycophant like them, then bully for them” (Joyce in Roberts 2009).

It is this trait – a willingness to bluntly speak his mind even when it goes against “party discipline” – that has both earned Joyce a growing fan base across rural Australia and infuriated Liberal colleagues, many of whom say he should make a decision: either quit the Coalition or play for the team. (Roberts 2009)

But Joyce had no intention of playing for the team. He embraced the politics of conviction in a “human way” very much confirming Street’s (2004) theory, discussed in Chapter 2, that the criteria by which politicians are judged and by which they operate are determined by the way the media focuses on their human qualities. To an extent, he framed his Telstra vote response in human terms which helped defray the back-flip allegations (Todd and Secombe 2005). This approach is very much an anti-political ploy consistent with ‘t Hart and Tindall’s argument (2009, p. 21) that, in these

circumstances, political space opens up for someone like Joyce to take a celebrity role; nonetheless, the limelight would probably still not have been as intense if it was not for the circumstances in which Joyce found himself in the Senate.

From July 2005 until July 2008, the Coalition held a majority in the Senate of one seat, which gave government mavericks like Joyce (and Lightfoot) the opportunity to take high-profile public stands on conviction issues as a price for their vote. This is why Joyce's vacillation on the Telstra vote in 2005 gained so much media attention. Since July 2008, with the Nationals in opposition, Joyce has been able to parlay his vote to Labor, who require independent and minor party support to pass legislation. This has been the perfect stage for the politician with celebrity pretensions.

Warren Truss (Warren Who?) may be National's leader in Canberra, but Barnaby Joyce is the go-to man whenever the press wants a hot quote or television news needs a hot interview ... Everyone wants Barnaby! (Cameron 2008)

Consequently, one reason he is listened to that he has the ability to play up to his celebrity status. He is variously described in the media as: "a runaway favourite with journalist drawn to a microphone in the way a stallion reacts to a teasing pony" (Wright 2009); "outspoken" (Berkovic 2008); "high-profile" (Roberts 2009); a populist" and "clearly the most charismatic figure in his party" (Raue 2009a); a "political firebrand" (Parnell 2009); a "tyro" (Grattan 2005a); the "007 of Australian politics" (Cameron 2008); and, inevitably, a "maverick" (Barry 2009). In addition, as one journalist notes, he has attained the ultimate celebrity imprimatur – first name status "like Madonna or Kylie" (Gordon 2008a).

Barnaby Joyce is a Canberra celebrity almost without peer. "Hooray for Barnaby Joyce," one commentator declared:

I don't actually agree with much the Nationals Senate leader has to say, but at least he's saying it in an interesting way ... Political response far too often is a game of copy and paste, as MPs regurgitate policy documents for the consumption of a bored public. The copy and paste function extends to press secretaries and department media, who struggle valiantly to mash key phrases together to answer earnest questions from journalists. Joyce, though, just

spouts stuff. He's a self-styled maverick, a grinning country conservative. He linked climate change action to Nazism, for goodness' sake! (Shepherd 2009).

**Summary.** In a previous discussion the suggestion was made that, to sustain a maverick reputation, it would be difficult for the prospective maverick *not* to hold a conviction agenda. Both Lightfoot and Joyce can readily be so described, and both have worked assiduously to maintain their conviction credentials, as the discussions in this case study hopefully shows.

It is pertinent at this point to note that the concept of a “conviction politician” is a matter of perception and not necessarily a matter of fact. It is a campaign tool: a quality a politician seeks to promote and have in their communication kitbag. From a campaign politics viewpoint, a politician seeks to be seen and valued for his or her convictions by the voter – but that does not necessarily mean the candidate is a person of conviction.

Of the two subjects of this case study, it is Lightfoot's personal commitment to his conviction agenda that is most in doubt. He was seen by many commentators as self-serving and opportunist, with the inference that his strongly espoused views were more an electoral convenience than a mantra by which he lived. For example, despite publically holding a very strong anti-refugee position, he attempted to prevent the Aziz family (the Iraqis connected to Woodside Energy who accompanied Talabani to Australia and met with Lightfoot in 2003) from being deported and intervened to obtain them resident visas (Skelton 2005).

With regard to celebrity politics, both subjects can lay claim to successfully adopting “celebrityhood” into their political communications. Ross Lightfoot's claim was more as a bit-player, a reflection of his notoriety and propensity to surprise, and was driven by his ego; Joyce's is focussed on the national political stage where he is very much a “star” political actor, placing himself at the centre of contemporary political debate. Both, to an extent, have had circumstances on their side to maximise their celebrity profile, as the discussion in Research Question 3 to follow will show.

### 5.4 Research Question 3

*Are mavericks more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with policy influence and career within the party, or do mavericks have a significant impact on party decision-making and policy formulation?*

The Chapter 2 discussion considered the relationship between the institutional control of the party and the maverick to arrive at this Research Question. Party discipline, it was noted, is stronger in Australia than other Westminster democracies and, therefore, adherence to the party line has become close to absolute for most politicians. The maverick, running against the norm, must inevitably have a testy relationship with their party and party leader.

Research conducted by Kam (2002, p. 4) shows Cabinet has a near monopoly on policy settings and the legislative program, and that the parties have a monopoly over parliament itself. These monopolies, according to Kam, rely on strict party discipline and consequently party unity is “the central strategic problem of modern parliamentary government” (2002, p. iv). He suggests that the party leader's control of the member's career prospects is the most important element. Kam's central thesis is that politicians are in perpetual tension between electoral popularity, on one hand, and promotion and policy influence on the other.

Likewise, Kingdon's (2002) view is that decision making in government is dynamic and volatile. He sees that the policy agenda is set by the confluence of three streams – political, policy and problem – but even then the result is unpredictable. The test here is that the maverick, often as devil's advocate, brings the intersection of policy, politics and problem together, and therefore has a significant impact on party policy.

**The Senate maverick as spoiler.** It was noted earlier that the primary vote for the Senate and the House of Representative is closely correlated, but that does not completely explain the make-up of the two chambers. In that respect, one aspect where the Senate differs from the House of Representatives is the Senate's tendency not to produce a majority for one of the major parties, and even if it does, not a majority for the government of the day. For instance, for the period from July 2005 to November 2007 the Coalition in government also held an absolute majority in the Senate, the first time in over 20 years. That brief two and a half year “window of opportunity” was the

only period in his eleven years as prime minister that John Howard did not have to bargain and negotiate with independent, minor party or opposition Senators to get his legislative programs through.

There are three main reasons for this feature of the Senate. The principal factor is that the Senate's proportional representation voting system allows minor parties and independents much more of an opportunity for election than in the House of Representatives. The Australian Democrats and more lately the Greens have filled the minor party role, holding between them since 1981 somewhere between four and ten seats, while the Senate has also contained between one and three independent/micro-party representatives. Therefore, in a situation where between six and 12 seats in a 76 seat chamber are not held by the major parties, it becomes very difficult for one of them to obtain a majority in its own right.

A further reason is that because the Senate has equal representation from the six states, it is not possible for one of the major parties to capitalise on any support in the higher population states. That means that political issues of the day, which may sway voters to one of the major parties or the other, have a somewhat less chance of being reflected in the Senate to the same extent as in the House. The third cause is that only half the Senators (unless in the rare case of a double dissolution) are elected at each general election. This also reduces the effect any general movement in voter sentiment.

The above situation is fertile ground for the maverick. In finely balanced Senates every vote counts for the major parties, so an errant Senator can cause great concern. And in considering Ross Lightfoot's and Barnaby Joyce's relationships with their parties, that is exactly the position that they exploited to the full.

**Ross Lightfoot.** Without putting too fine a point on it, the question occurs as to why, with the controversies that Lightfoot attracted, did the Liberals persevere with him? He did, without doubt, inflict considerable political embarrassment on the party and it must have occurred to the leadership that he might be more trouble than he was worth. As discussed, the decisions to appoint him in 1997 and to pre-select him in 2001 were largely due to the support he could muster in the Western Australian branch of the Liberal Party – it is the state branches of the parties that endorse candidates; but if the Canberra leadership had not wanted him, it could have applied pressure to have him

dis-endorsed, in particular for the 2001 election. Head office intervention is often done unobtrusively, but as Daley (2007) notes while Howard was prime minister, “The PM can and will intervene in preselections when it suits him.”

One answer is that the party simply had too much at stake in Lightfoot’s seat. There is no indication that Liberals saw ministerial talent or a policy contribution in Lightfoot - or that he particularly saw it in himself - but he had something they did need: the ability to win a Senate seat that they probably would not have won with another candidate.

Western Australia had returned three Liberal Senators at both the 1996 and 1998 election and, given the always fine balance in the Senate, every seat counts. Thirty nine votes are required to pass legislation (the President has a deliberative vote and ties are decided in the negative) so the government had to deal with the Democrats and micro party/independent candidates to prosecute their legislative program. The most striking instance of this was the Democrats supporting the a goods and service tax in 1998.

Approaching the 2001 election the Coalition held 35 Senate seats and Labor 29. The Coalition’s conservative base in rural areas was under attack from the One Nation party, which meant the third Coalition seat in Western Australia could easily be lost. It was to the Liberal Party’s benefit to allow Lightfoot to be an outlet for hard-right, conservative views in Western Australia and, as already outlined, Ross Lightfoot played to that audience perfectly to clinch the seat ahead of One Nation. He might have been an embarrassment to the Liberal Party – he was even rebuked by Howard during the election campaign when he described refugees as “repulsive” (Egan 2002b) – but party hard-heads deemed him worth tolerating for the seat.

After the 2001 election, Lightfoot continued to be a controversial figure. There was one notable and highly publicised event in 2003 when Greens Senators Bob Brown and Kerry Nettle claim they were assaulted by Lightfoot in the parliamentary chamber. American president George Bush had just addressed a joint sitting, and Nettle tried to hand Bush a letter but was stopped by several Liberal members. Lightfoot allegedly told Nettle to “Fuck off and die” (Kingston 2003).

So by March 2005, when Lightfoot was embroiled in the Iraq scandal, there were many calls for John Howard to demand his resignation (ABC-Radio 2005b). This did not eventuated, not because the Liberals would have lost the seat (under Section 15 of the



Constitution he would have been replaced by another Liberal) - the danger for Howard was that Lightfoot might have left the Liberal party to sit as an independent.

The Liberals at the time were looking ahead to July 2005, when the Senators elected at the 2004 election would take office and give them a rare Senate majority – of one – so Howard could not afford the loss of even a single Coalition Senator. Another danger lay in Howard allowing an investigation into Lightfoot's behaviour, as he was called on by some to do. The pressure for Lightfoot to stand aside – that is, not attend the Senate – for the period of the investigation would have been enormous. A long investigation would have deprived the conservatives of their majority for months, if not more than a year.

John Howard is standing behind Ross "of the desert" Lightfoot – not with any enthusiasm but purely because he needs his Senate seat, especially after 1 July. Senior ministers giggled at Lightfoot's absurd adventure as the PM told parliament yesterday that the rogue senator's latest explanation of his behaviour was "credible". "Credible" is the last word one could apply to the behaviour of Western Australia's Walter Mitty during this affair. But while the facts are one thing, the politics are another. On 1 July, the Coalition will hold a one-seat majority in the Senate. (Kelly 2005)

The contention is that the above discussion, supported in this case study by other depictions of Lightfoot's political behaviour, reveals that he did what it took to keep his seat. If that meant going against the party over policy or preference deals to maximise his vote, then he was prepared to do it. It was clear from the attitude of the party to him that he was barely tolerated by the leadership, and that a career or promotion to the ministry was not going to occur. Lightfoot did not expect a promotion either. He admitted that, when he first entered state parliament in 1986, he had ministerial ambitions, but he realised that in the Senate that opportunity was lost (ABC-TV 2007). Kam's (2002) central thesis is that, in the face of electorally unpopular party positions, the candidate must choose between career or electoral popularity; the evidence is clear that in these circumstances Ross Lightfoot chose the latter.

It is hard to discern that Lightfoot, from his own parliamentary or lobbying efforts, had a significant impact on decision making and policy – any more measurable than a non-maverick Senate backbencher. Lightfoot's impact on policy and party decisions came

from him being there, from holding one of the Senate seats his party needed to pass legislation. This is not a factor of his personal abilities or actions; rather a matter of circumstance. From his appointment in 1997 up until July 2005, whether the Coalition had Lightfoot's particular vote probably did not matter too much. Through that period, providing a deal could be brokered with the Democrats, the loss of up to three Coalition votes could be tolerated; but from July 2005 until the Coalition lost government in November 2007, every vote counted. His hold over the party came from the threat that he might leave the party and sit as an independent, if he wished – becoming the Coalition's Sword of Damocles. But he did not use this power to promote a policy agenda, as Barnaby Joyce did. Ross Lightfoot might have held maverick views and contradicted party policy in public, but he never once voted against his party during his Senate career.

**Barnaby Joyce.** Barnaby Joyce had the power to be a spoiler too, but used it in a different way. Whereas Lightfoot, some might see, used his Liberal seat as a license to espouse his hard-right views and promote his own interests, Joyce uses his National Party seat to launch fundamental change on his party and to promote his place within it. Whereas Lightfoot confirmed, largely, Kam's theory (2002, p. 199) by choosing electoral popularity over career, Joyce has turned the theory on its head: he seeks electoral popularity *and* career.

The National Party's problem in their relationship with the Liberals in the Coalition has been that they are having difficulty asserting their interests. But Joyce sees it as his mission to change that.

Joyce is a magnet for publicity — and controversy. After he took over as leader of the Nationals' five-member Senate late last year, Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull offered him a position in his shadow cabinet, apparently to shut him up. But Joyce declined, claiming he did not want to sacrifice his freedom to "call it as he sees it". Since then, he's proved quite a headache for Turnbull. (Gordon 2008a)

It is this trait, a willingness to bluntly speak his mind even when it goes against party discipline, that has both earned Joyce a growing fan base across rural Australia and infuriated Liberal colleagues, many of whom say he should make a decision: either quit the Coalition or play for the team. Joyce's refusal of a front bench position under

Turnbull was described at the time as a “masterstroke” as it gave him “a licence to slay political opponents, Labor and Liberal” (Cameron 2008).

However, Joyce’s refusal of promotion did not last. When Tony Abbott took over the Liberal leadership from Turnbull in December 2009, Joyce accepted the position of Shadow Minister for Finance. Not long after, an interview with *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist, Tim Lester, revealed the problems Joyce was having trying to juggle maverickism with career.

LESTER: Barnaby Joyce, Australians love your unfiltered honesty, so why on earth have you agreed to toe a party line instead of just giving us Barnaby’s view?

JOYCE: I won’t have a personality transplant, but I don’t want to crap on anyone else. It is extremely important to me that I do something of value while I am here ...

LESTER: You had a meeting with Tony Abbott, what did he say to you?

JOYCE: Well, we just sat down and had a few beers ...

LESTER: Was it a discussion about the good Senator needs to shut his mouth a bit more?

JOYCE: No it wasn’t. It’s been played like that in the media but it wasn’t. It was a case of what is going to happen to you mate if they’re going to focus in on the smallest thing you say and make that the whole story; it doesn’t matter if the vast majority of what you say is true, but if they are after you they have to bring you down and to bring you down they are going to look for any opening they can get ... I going to call it the way I see it, but I have to be cognisant of the fact that if they can catch me with a goat they will. (Lester 2010)

In accepting a frontbench position it has been a challenge for Joyce to maintain his maverick credentials. It has put in danger his franchise to be outspoken. His tactic has been, as the above interview suggests, to portray himself as a “rube” who, through some stroke of luck, has popped up in the sophisticated Finance portfolio, but being the honest and simple guy he is, still cannot help saying what he really thinks.

But the contention here is that Joyce's real agenda is the opposite. He is a National Party politician who took advantage of the crisis within the Liberals over leadership to manoeuvre himself into a portfolio that the Nationals would normally never dream of getting. He has done so through using a calculated appeal to anti-political sentiment in the electorate that he knows the Liberals and the Nationals need.

In many ways the Nationals have found themselves in a contradictory position: they are trying to tap into a marginalised section of the electorates without becoming marginalised themselves. Joyce counters this marginalisation by taking a more central role in the Coalition. He moves back and forwards between "mouthing off" and then apologising for it, as though he is out of control when he is merely reflecting the contradictory game he is playing.

When his Labor opponents call him a "bearded lady" and a "freak show" (Lester 2010) they are emphasising that he is out of place in the political mainstream and should not be where he is. This plays into Joyce's hands: that is not a great problem with voters who do not regard the political mainstream very highly. Even calling him "irresponsible" is not as important to many people as to whether he is holding true to his convictions. It makes him into an exception to the political class rather than the very ordinary, opportunistic, National politician he arguably is. So the National's leader, Warren Truss, has been overshadowed by Joyce, but Truss has given Joyce his head because he is valuable to the Coalition in appealing to marginalised voters.

Warren Truss is leader of the National Party but the most prominent National in Australian politics and the loudest National voice is that of Barnaby Joyce. He gives every appearance, as Grattan (2009) maintains, of having made himself *de facto* leader. When Joyce took up his seat in July 2005, John Anderson had just resigned the leadership and, although he gave the top job away for a number of reasons, he did think he would not have the energy to manage Joyce (Grattan 2009). His successors, first Mark Vaile and now Truss, have found it hard.

Although his vote does not have the quite the weight in opposition as it had in government, he has flourished as far as pursuing his maverick re-birthing of the Nationals, particularly since September 2008 when he gained the party's Senate leadership of the five-member team. In addition, he has struck up a close relationship

with South Australian independent, Nick Xenophon, with whom, for instance, he ran joint advertisements against Chinalco's bid to increase its stake in Rio Tinto (AAP 2009c).

There are many examples of Joyce taking the National's agenda as his own. For example, Joyce and three other Nationals senators (Fiona Nash, John Williams and Ron Boswell) voted "no" against Coalition policy to support the government over alcopops tax. The Coalition under Turnbull at the time had not wanted the issue to be a double-dissolution trigger, but Joyce did not care: "Bring on a double dissolution" (Joyce in the *Business Spectator* 2009). On emissions trading Joyce declared it "... just a piece of rubbish" (AAP 2009b) and "the most fraudulent job-destroying policy waffle that I would not vote for, even in a pink fit" (Joyce 2009). He praised Turnbull as a man of conviction on emissions trading (Grattan 2009) – just a different conviction to his own.

Joyce's career ambitions to lead the party, and to re-position it, have been alluded to already. In January 2009, after a conversation with ex-prime minister John Howard - an interaction which surprised some commentators (Roberts 2009) - Joyce declared that he was considering not re-contesting the Senate election in 2010, but seeking to win a House of Assembly seat. A move by Joyce to the lower house was seen as "critical for the coalition to win back the '*Howard Battlers*' who deserted the coalition in droves at the last election" (Roberts 2009).

At the time, Joyce appeared to enthusiastically accept the advice but ultimately ran for the Senate again in 2010. It is difficult to see the benefit to Joyce in swapping the Senate for the House of Representative as the value of his vote would be less. Another complication is that, as things stood, no safe lower house seat was available, and running in a marginal Government seat (something he said he would do) if unsuccessful would have killed his political career cold. Subsequently in May 2009 he dropped his plans to run for a lower house seat, saying the Coalition would not guarantee that the Nationals would keep its numbers in the Senate: "We have to maintain our numbers, especially our senators from Queensland. There's no point taking a risk and also letting down your own side" (AAP 2009a).

Kam's central theory, as he points out (2002, p. 199), is not an absolute rule; he readily accepts that party unity is shaped by a variety of factors, for example, electoral pressure

and social norms. And when a party is in close to terminal decline, then the power of the leadership to discipline and control must start to collapse, which is the case for the Nationals. The answer to Research Question 3 in Barnaby Joyce's case is that he has grabbed both electoral popularity and a political career. The proposition that mavericks have a significant impact on decision-making and policy formulation, is strongly supported by this discussion. Of all National Party MPs, Joyce arguably has the greatest policy influence – not just because of the power of his vote in the Senate, but because the leadership realise he has the support of large sections of the National's supporter base, which gives him the authority to force the party policy agenda to meet his own views.

## **5.5 Case study conclusions**

Ross Lightfoot and Barnaby Joyce occupy a similar space on the left-right political spectrum because they both represent, broadly, ideologically conservative rural views and values. Nonetheless, their political careers have been different, the impacts they sought to make have been different, and their apparent motivations have been different. Lightfoot's reputation is much more as a headline-grabber than an agenda-setter, whereas Joyce has influenced policy from the moment he entered parliament. By the end of his political career, Lightfoot had become almost a caricature, seemingly forever embroiled in controversy over his extreme social views and ultimately shunned by most in his party. Joyce, by contrast, is at the centre of his party's leadership; he has set about the task of finding the Nationals a new purpose and new a base as part of an overall re-energising of the right.

Research Question 1 sought to establish if maverick's campaign success was attributable to competent issue ownership. The Senate's "above the line" voting system results in a prospective candidate concentrating his or her campaign effort, not on the voting public, but on securing the highest place possible on the party ticket. For Lightfoot, this proved difficult as his maverick views had alienated him from a sizable portion of his party, which meant there were concerted efforts to have him dropped to an unwinnable spot on the ticket. In Joyce's case, it took three elections for him to obtain the top position on the National's ticket. Both showed considerable skills in framing their campaign messages in terms favourable to small and micro parties on the conservative-right of the political spectrum, in particular One Nation, in order to extract

favourable preference deals on those parties' group tickets, and to attract the preferences of below the line voters.

The conclusion from the discussion was that these two mavericks were successful in aligning their issue agendas with (sufficient) influential party members who could secure their pre-selection, and with the personnel from other parties who had influence over preference swapping arrangements. The contention is that it is their maverickism that gave them the advantage; their preparedness to go against their own party's policies and against the leadership, if necessary, meant that the message to their constituents was more compelling than the party's. This conclusion lends support to Research Question 1, and to Petrocik's (1996) central argument that issue emphasis is specific to a candidate and that electors support candidates based on the issue "handling" competence.

Research Question 2 considered how the political message is communicated by the maverick. Both Lightfoot and Joyce were seen to fit the meaning of a "conviction politician" as both were known for strongly-held views and for consistently advocating them. It was noted that the conviction epithet is not necessarily a matter of fact, but rather one of perception. A candidate or elected member will seek to portray themselves as someone of conviction as a campaign or media messaging device; but that does not inevitably mean they personally live by those convictions or apply them consistently.

Lightfoot's claim to conviction status may be something of an affectation. Although he was consistent in the way he espoused his issue agenda, there was some evidence he is not unfailing in the way he applied it in private. Joyce, on the other hand, appears to be more personally committed to his advocated beliefs, but has had some difficulty applying them politically when his convictions have come into collision with the unavoidable compromises required of a career politician. Nonetheless, Research Question 2 suggested that mavericks strive to be seen as conviction politicians, and the case study lends strong support to that contention.

In evaluating this research question, it was found that both mavericks are perceived to have "star power", which 't Hart and Tindall (2009, p.4) see as politics driven by fame and admiration. Ross Lightfoot's celebrityhood was more centred on notoriety and

shock-value, whereas Joyce projects himself on to the media centre-stage, very much the anti-politician (Keane 2002, p. 13), reflecting the interests of his rural constituents who no longer respond or identify with traditional political communication.

The central proposition of Research Question 3, that mavericks are expected to be more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with promotion within the party, was more ambiguous. This question was derived from studies by Kam (2002) who researched the relationship between leaders of parliamentary parties and their MPs, and how the two sides interact. He argued that, in the face of electorally unpopular party decisions or policy, leaders take advantage of their member's parliamentary career ambitions to maintain unity. This forces the individual candidate to choose between electoral popularity or career, with the contention here that the maverick holding a personal conviction agenda will choose the former.

Ross Lightfoot's life in politics supports the proposition. The case study showed that he did what was politically necessary to hold his seat by ensuring he reflected the values of his constituents. There is no evidence that he sought promotion with the parliamentary party, and there is no indication that it was considered. In fact, Lightfoot was only tolerated by the party because he had the ability to win a seat. That tolerance declined through his time in the Senate as his mis-adventures mounted, to the extent that he could no longer muster enough support within the party to retain pre-selection for the 2007 election.

Barnaby Joyce's career, on the other hand, is not an exact fit for Kam's theory. He certainly has not forsaken electoral popularity, as the discussion on his celebrity status demonstrates, but he also has not abandoned a political career, either; in fact, the opposite as he has accepted a front-bench position and declared his ambition to lead the National Party – some say he is the *de facto* leader already. Within the Nationals, a party in decline and crumbling organisationally, the authority of the leadership is too weak to satisfy Kam's assumption that the leader has the power to enforce discipline. Kam's central theory, as he recognises, is not an absolute rule, and Joyce may be the exception that proves it.

Research Question 3 further seeks to determine if the maverick has a significant impact on decision making within the party. In Joyce's case the proposition is clearly



supported. Under Joyce's urging, the Nationals are attempting to re-find and re-define their policy position, separate from the Liberals and more aligned to their rural base. The problem Joyce has is that the traditional supporter base is declining in numbers, being eroded by demographic and economic change, and under attack by independents in historically safe National seats. These circumstances, where parties are struggling with identity and meaning, have provided the ideal ground for a maverick like Joyce to seize the initiative.

Ross Lightfoot presents a different situation. It could not be said that he has had an impact on policy from his own efforts to an extent any more measurable than a non-maverick backbench Senator. However, as mentioned above, Lightfoot's maverick credentials contributed to him winning a seat in circumstances where a non-maverick might have failed. This seat was coveted by his leadership as it allowed the party to hold a majority in parliament, and thereby the enhanced ability to implement party policy. It could be said that the maverick does have an indirect influence on policy and decision making in circumstances where the maverick can win seats for the party that would not otherwise be won.

## 6 The Leader: Mark Latham

### 6.1 Background

Mark Latham was 32 years old when he won the New South Wales seat of Werriwa for the ALP at a by-election in January 1994. Less than a decade later he was Labor leader. He held that post for just over year, from 2 December 2003 until 18 January 2005 when he retired from politics. At the age of 42 he was the youngest leader of the ALP in a century, the most controversial and the most written about, as this discussion will show.

Latham was immensely popular with voters when first elevated to the leadership, capturing the public's imagination and returning opinion poll results that looked certain to deliver Labor victory at the October 2004 election. That was not to be: Latham lost his popularity and led the opposition to defeat, handing the John Howard led Liberal-National Party Coalition a fourth term, and sending Labor into a long bout of soul-searching and recrimination.

The case design developed in Chapter 3 is applied here to ensure consistency in reporting and to allow effective cross-case analysis in Chapter 7; however, there are factors unique to Latham's political life, in contrast to the other mavericks studied here, that have resulted in a slightly different approach. The main point of divergence is the large amount written by or about Latham in both scholarly sources and the general media. There are at least six political biographies – four written before his retirement, (Donavan 2004; McGregor 2004; Duffy 2004; Simons 2004) and two after (Crabb 2005; Lagan 2005b); and eight books or contributions to books written by Latham himself – six on governance and policy based on his “third way” beliefs; an autobiographical account of his time in politics, *The Latham Diaries*; and a book of political quotations. In addition, Latham has made over 20 contributions to edited journals and has numerous newspaper and media credits (he currently writes a fortnightly column for the *Australian Financial Review*); while both academic and general commentary on his political career can be found in literally hundreds of sources. In short, Mark Latham is one of the most written about politicians of any generation in Australia, and as an author himself is one of the most prolific.

Compare this prodigious resource with the combined published material associated with Harry Quick, Petro Georgiou, Bob Katter, Ross Lightfoot and Barnaby Joyce.

There are no biographies or autobiographies written for any of them and, with the exception of a few journal items authored by Georgiou, there are scarcely any scholarly references of any sort on record. The preceding two case studies represent the most comprehensive account of these five politicians available in the literature today, and hopefully makes a contribution to the body of knowledge. To take a similar approach to Latham's political life in the space available here, by contrast, would add very little as more detailed and considered accounts are available elsewhere.

Consequently, to meet the aims of the thesis, a two-part approach is adopted. The first part primarily concentrates on Latham's life up until he became leader in December 2003, using the same framework, theory and assumptions adopted in the preceding case studies. The second part will focus on the last thirteen months of Latham's career as ALP leader, from December 2003 until he quit politics in January 2005. This part will also cast an eye, where appropriate, over the whole of Latham's life and career in order to place his leadership into a maverick context. This approach is justified because the literature shows a cleft in Latham's political currency at the point he becomes leader; in effect, the discussion here chronicles the rise and then the fall of Latham the politician.

## **6.2 Latham to December 2003**

Mark Latham was born in 1961 and grew up in the public housing estate of Green Valley in western Sydney, the oldest child and only boy in a family of four children. His father, Don, worked as a foreman at a near-by box factory where he met Mark's mother, Lorraine. Despite a 16 year age difference, they married in 1958. Green Valley was nicknamed "Dodge City" by the locals for the habit of welfare-dependent families doing "midnight flits" from their Housing Department homes when the bills grew too onerous (McGregor 2004, p. 21). Although the neighbourhood was undoubtedly poor, the Latham's circumstances, according to McGregor, should not be confused with poverty.

The home, although modest, was on a treed block with space for a driveway down the side of the house, leading to a backyard big enough for cricket. The house itself was small. Three bedrooms: one for him, one shared by his three younger sisters, and a third for his parents. (McGregor 2004, p. 22)

McGregor's account of the Latham's suburban dwelling could be that of the living circumstances for most Australians, whether in rented or owned houses, raising families in post-war Australian suburbs. So in that regard, Latham's childhood could be described as unremarkable.

Not long after Latham was born, his father changed jobs to work as a technician at the Redfern Mail exchange, which meant from their home in the outskirts of western Sydney he had longer to travel to and from work. The family saw less of him, and Lorrain Latham felt depressed by the emptiness, isolation and loneliness of the sparse housing estate with few services (McGregor 2004, p. 21). To compound matters, Latham senior struggled with gambling so money for the family was frequently short. In these difficult circumstances, Mark's mother took on the responsibility of ensuring that the young Latham would not be disadvantaged in life. In Richard's (2009) view he became her "special project"; she devoted herself to him and nurtured him in the belief that he was destined for greatness.

Despite his absences from the family, Don Latham, too, had high expectations for his son, and told his friends: "He's gonna be prime minister one day, this boy" (Lagan 2005b, p. 44). Hence, notwithstanding the strident circumstances, there was never any doubt within the family about the eldest child's specialness. He was subject to "extreme parental urging" (Duffy 2004, p. 16), while the household was "organised around his needs" (Duffy 2004, p. 19). Mark Latham's first wife, Gabrielle Gwyther, long after they had separated gave her view of his favoured family position: "there are lots of ways of being privileged in life, rather than just looking at the purely economic" (in Donavan 2004, p. 187).

Latham was a very bright student who went to a selective high school, Hurlstone Agricultural, where he was dux in 1978 coming first in Agriculture, English and Modern History. He enrolled in a degree in political economy at the University of Sydney in 1979, then in 1980 he won the economics prize for second year students. He was told of his award on the day his father died of a stroke – it was only then that he learned from Lorraine Latham that his father had been married before and that he had two half-sisters.

Richards (2009) notes Latham's great disappointment that his father never knew of his son's achievements at university. It is apparent, in Richard's view, that Don Latham tended to be hard on his son. He was a demanding father, a man who drank with his mates at the Green Valley Hotel and gambled excessively, and who was evidently emotionally absent at crucial points in the young Latham's upbringing. As Mark Latham wrote in his *Diaries*:

I was proud of my father but struggle with the realisation that I never knew him properly, never got to talk to him as an adult about his other life – his first marriage, his daughters, his problems on the punt, etc ... Mum was the hero from my childhood but Dad remains my emotional legacy ... A son must always know his father and not be left wondering. (Latham 2005a, p. 224)

“Left wondering what?” Richards asks. “Whether his father really loved him?” (Richards 2009). The relationship between fathers and their children, particularly boys, is a reoccurring theme in Latham's life. In Richards's view there appears to be an echo of the “absent father” experience in Latham's later emphasis on child-centred policies, and his own preoccupation with being a “home dad”. When he was leader, Latham frequently felt the absence of his own sons, which he wrote about often in his *Diaries*. For example, of one play session in his office with his son, Isaac: “I didn't want to come out of the cocoon. I would have happily stayed there, and promised Isaac that one day we will. I'll escape and become a proper dad again. Our little secret” (Latham 2005a, p. 285).

Richards's (2009) opinion is that Latham had lingering doubts about his father's love, and that this fuelled a narcissistic streak throughout his adult life. On the other hand, another of Latham's biographers, Duffy (2003, p. 23), is more prepared to take at face value Latham's own view of his childhood, observing that although Latham senior was a “quiet man who gambled too much” the family home was a “happy one”. Latham declared to Duffy, “You couldn't have loved the place or loved your parents any more than I did as a child. I had a happy childhood” (2003, p. 23).

After Don Latham's death the family accepted help from a group of his friends, about 25 men who were regulars at the Green Valley Hotel. Many were local ALP branch members and Liverpool City Councillors who put two dollars in a week each to support the family until Mark Latham finished university. Although the Lathams accepted help

from these benefactors, McGregor maintains that that did not mean Mark abrogated his responsibilities to his family. He alone of the four children handed wages from part-time work to his mother, and even though still at university he assumed a patriarchal role, becoming the family's "emotional prop, adviser to siblings and financial decision-maker" (2004, p. 38).

Latham's involvement with ALP affairs began in January 1979 – the year he started university – when he joined the Green Valley branch of the ALP, although he stayed away from "the poisonous antics" of Young Labor (Duffy 2003, p. 23). During university holidays he worked for the member for the federal seat of Werriwa, John Kerin, who arranged for Latham to meet with ex-Labor prime minister and also former Werriwa representative, Gough Whitlam, to talk about his honours thesis. He gained the mentorship of Whitlam and, after completing his honours year in 1982, went to work with him for five years as a research assistant. He spent much of this time working on the former prime minister's political history, *The Whitlam Government*. Then followed his controversial time at Liverpool Council and several secondments to New South Wales premier Bob Carr's office as an advisor (Bongiorno 2004).

Later, in 1987 when Latham himself was elected to the Liverpool Council, he clashed with two of his benefactors, Frank Heyhoe and Casey Conway, whom he accused of "big-noting" and making "a fuss" over their past charity. He now sees accepting their help as a "mistake" (Latham 2005a, p. 205). He accuses Heyhoe of not supporting him for Senate pre-selection in 1989, while Conway he believes was resentful when Latham won the mayor's position in 1991. "I busted up their club at Liverpool Council and they hated it, hated me ... Now I wear their bile and bitterness – the price of doing the right thing at Council" (Latham 2005a, p. 206).

A few years before Latham's election to the Liverpool Council he joined the NSW Right for "pragmatic reasons" realising that he had to join a faction to have any hope of pre-selection for state or federal politics, and "the Right seemed to be more realistic on economic issues than the Left" (Latham 2005a, p. 39).

By his own admission, he had long-held ambitions to enter parliament (Latham 2005a, p. 410), and he used this period during his twenties to establish himself as a prospective candidate. In 1989, at age 28, he ran for pre-selection for the state seat of Liverpool,

which he initially won after an acrimonious dispute with the party's review panel, but had to stand aside when the ALP national executive at the eleventh hour imposed its own candidate to avoid a scandal over alleged ballot-rigging by both the left and right factions (Duffy 2003). In that year he also sought a position on the Labor Senate ticket, but missed out in a deal between the party factions.

Werriwa, which incorporated part of the Liverpool local government area, was an obvious fit for Latham. When John Kerin was dropped from prime minister Paul Keating's frontbench after Labor's surprise win in 1993, and decide to retire, Latham began organising the numbers in local branches to gain support for pre-selection. His effective branch management coupled with the support and patronage of Keating, Whitlam and Kerin (Richards 2009), resulted in his pre-selection unopposed. Latham won the January 1994 by-election with 50 percent of the primary vote and 59.5 percent two-party preferred. He retained dual political roles, member for Werriwa and Liverpool mayor, until June of that year when he resigned from the council at the same time he undertook treatment for testicular cancer.

### **6.3 Research Question 1**

*Are Mavericks electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents?*

The purpose here is to test a "campaign effect" from the presence of a maverick; that is that the policy issues of the voters are aligned with those of the candidate. The assumption is founded on Petrocik's (1996) claim that the voter will support the candidate advantaged by the issues agenda. As outlined in the two previous case studies, this is a difficult proposition to test empirically since knowing with any certainty what the voters of a particular constituency hold as its problem concerns at any given time is a difficult task because voter opinions are not reliably recorded at division level in Australia.

Notwithstanding, inferences can be made by comparing the electoral performance of a candidate with that of the party. In Latham's case, if he did relatively better than Labor's average effort, it is one indication that his issue agenda was aligned more closely with Werriwa voters than his party's. The logic follows that, if Latham was merely an echo for the party line, then his vote would move more closely with the

party's. Latham contested four general elections. Figure 6.1 tabulates the change in primary vote in percentage terms for each election from the previous, both for Werriwa and for the ALP nationally.

<i>Election</i>	<i>Werriwa</i>	<i>National ALP</i>	<i>Werriwa compared to national ALP</i>
1996	-13.5	-6.2	-7.3
1998	+2.7	+1.3	+1.4
2001	-.3	-2.3	+2.0
2004	+2.3	-0.3	+2.6

Figure 6.1 Werriwa – Change in primary vote percentage between elections

Figure 7.2 shows that Latham did much worse than the Labor national average at his first general election, then after that did better than the party at each of his remaining elections. The large loss of votes in 1996 can be party explained, it is likely, by the “retirement slump effect” (Jackman 2005) reflecting the loss of a personal vote in the retiring John Kerin. It should be noted that the reduction in primary vote in 1996 is a comparison with the previous general election in 1993. Latham was elected at a by-election in 1994, where his vote was only slightly better than 1996. Labor was in government at the time, and governments on average do poorly at by-election (Bennett and Newman 2008). In other words, Latham took the retirement slump and the by-election “hits” in his 1994 by-election win, but still did not improve his standing in the two years to 1996.

Why he apparently failed to connect with the voters in that period is difficult to know. Six months after he was elected, in June 1994, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer and had an operation to remove a testicle. He resigned from the Liverpool council and began an intensive course of radio therapy. He was largely on sick leave from May until October of that year. In addition, New South Wales recorded a greater swing on primary votes (9 percent) than the national average of 6.2 in 1996; and safe Labor “heartland” seats in NSW, including Werriwa, Sydney, Shortland, Robertson, Hunter, Greenway, Grayndler, Chifley and Lindsay (which was lost) all received double-digit negative swings, as middle Australians (as Queensland premier Wayne Goss put it at



the time) were “sitting on their verandahs with baseball bats just waiting for Keating to come” (related in Farr 2007).

A further factor would have been that Kerin had the profile of a minister (he had been treasurer) lifting his recognition in the electorate. Given all these circumstances, and the fact that Latham was young and just establishing himself in parliament, it is not surprising that his first general election produced an unremarkable result. It is interesting to note that Latham himself recognised that “politics was changing in Western Sydney” and that he should run a “marginal seat campaign” for 1996 (Latham 2005a, p. 30) because of his concerns over the ascendancy of John Howard as opposition Liberal leader. His fears were confirmed when Labor lost the 1996 election after thirteen years in government.

As it turned out, Latham’s result in 1996 was no better or worse than the other normally safe Labor seats around him with a similar economic profile. He was happy enough himself with his campaign, seeing that his “hard work had paid off” (Latham 2005a, p.43). On a two-party preferred basis, in 1996 Latham retained Werriwa with a margin of 6.2 percent; at his final election in 2004 it was stretched to 9.3. It can be seen from this and the data in Figure 6.1 that, after the initial large drop in support, he gradually rebuilt the margin in his seat, out-performing his party at every election thereafter in the process. This occurrence supports the Research Question that, over time, voters preferred Latham’s policy agenda to that of the party’s, and that he was better at owning and framing the issues important to them.

The presence of a positive campaign effect in Latham’s maverickism is further supported by his increased attention to the policy debate in Australia. As already noted, he was a prolific writer of books, journal papers and media opinion items throughout his parliamentary career, and probably remains one of the most, if not the most, prolific writer of any serving Australian politician. Most of his contributions to the public debate were manifestos based on “third way” principles, made politically popular by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton. During the period from 1996 to early 2004 Latham’s main contributions included *Civilising Global Capital* (1998), *The Enabling State* with Peter Botsman (2001), *From the Suburbs* (2003), *What Did You Learn Today?* (2001b), and a chapter in one of Third Way chronicler Anthony Giddens’s books, *The Global Third Way Debate* (2001a).

A feature of Latham's writing and public policy statements is that he increasingly became more aggressive and outspoken about his views. He was also remarkably consistent, honing in on a message that emphasised a journey: that reform was needed to make Australia a better place. It is very much an "us-versus-them" rhetoric, where he sees himself as one of the suburban underclass, an "outsider" busting the establishment "clubs":

Wherever power and privilege are concentrated – whether in big business, high society or big bureaucracies – we need to be anti-establishment. The outsiders want us to shake the tree, to rattle the cage on their behalf. They want us to be less respectable and less orthodox, to break down the powerful centre of society. (Latham 2003a, p. 12)

Much of Latham's writings were contrary to Labor Party orthodox thinking, particularly that of the left-wing, union-based rump, and often contrary to official Labor Party policy. He had a firm notion that he represented suburban thinking and suburban frustration with the elites – which he saw as big anything, particularly unions and government. This maverick thinking appeared to have stuck a chord in Werriwa and contributed to his constituent's view of him.

Perhaps the key to Latham's policy alignment with the voters during this period is that he applied, or at least gave the appearance that he applied, a problem-solving attitude to his agenda. He confirms the theory that voters, particularly dis-engaged, suburban voters, want their politicians to be "fixers" (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Krosnick and Kinder 1990) for the issues that directly affect their lives. He wrote the following in his *Diaries*, in 1996 just after being appointed for the first time to the shadow front-bench:

The workers have their opinions, based on personal experience and an earthy, practical view of the world. I'd say they regard the elites as a bunch of wankers. What they want from Labor is a problem-solving approach to government: decent services, a good education for their kids and a public sector that off-sets the inequality of the open economy. (Latham 2005a, p. 54)

Latham appealed to suburbs, not in the form of traditional Labor welfare largesse but directly to the aspirational suburbanites themselves, whose primary interests, Latham argued, were focussed at the neighbourhood level (Button 2002). The conclusion is that

Mark Latham's continued, high-profile agitation of his issue agenda resulted in relatively high constituent awareness of his actions and a high level of concurrence with his views. Latham was, during the period under review here, successful at owning and framing the important issues, and in offering solutions to voter problems.

## 6.4 Research Question 2

*Is one explanation for maverick success that the maverick is a more accomplished communicator than the party loyalist - better at "conviction politics" and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of "celebrityhood"?*

The previous discussion mainly considers the way Latham is viewed by his electorate, but at some point the dialogue must broaden to his standing with the country's voters as a whole. This is because, from almost his beginning in parliament, he was touted as and saw himself as a future leader and prime minister.

These two propositions make an appropriate point of departure as their analysis requires an assessment of not just what Latham says, but the way he delivers his message and the way he is interpreted in the media. Research Question 2 asks if the maverick will want to be seen as a conviction politician, and tied up with that are notions of trust and believability, or the "terms of trust" as Uhr (2007) expresses it; and further asks if the maverick integrates and engages with the world of popular culture in order to maximise the message (Street 2004, p. 437).

Latham promulgated what he believed were innovative and socially progressive policies based on "third way" principles (Button 2002). He wanted to modernise the Labor Party: his was a struggle, as he saw it, against a status quo that had to be conquered and dismantled – he was on a quest. To do this he constructed an "insiders" versus "outsiders" narrative that ran as a consistent vein through his political thoughts. By 2003, the concept was well established in his writing.

I would argue that the political spectrum is best understood as a struggle between insiders and outsiders – the abstract values of the powerful centre versus the pragmatic belief of those who feel disenfranchised by social change. (Latham 2003a, p. 20)

His choice of language is telling: this is a “struggle” by the “disenfranchised” against the “powerful”. Latham is in a fight against the “machine men” within the ALP who execute “machine politics” – poll-driven policies designed only to tell the electorate what they want to hear (Latham 2005a, pp. 5-6). Winning government and power, he believed, was the sole agenda for Labor's process-obsessed politicians rather than improving the nation. Indeed, Latham considered that his greatest enemies were not the conservatives but the power-hungry members within his own ranks. In Latham's view, Australia had become a country devoid of “social capital” at the expense of rampant materialism, central government control and the selfishness of the insiders. In his books he advocated the rebuilding of social capital free from both corporate hierarchy and state bureaucracy.

There is no doubt that he had strongly-held convictions about how he believed policy should be formed, and he carried those convictions throughout his political career. He was, according to Simons (2004), “a conviction politician and an acute thinker.” It is striking how consistent his views are from his earlier writing in *Civilising Global Capital* in 1998 through to the lamentations in his *Diaries* in 2005. In *Global Capital* he champions personal incentive and the profit motive (1998, p. 38), decries the intransience of unions (1998, p. 85), accepts that big-government and the welfare state have failed (1998, p. xxxvi), and advocates devolving choice and decision making to the community level (1998, p. 301). These are the same themes that resound through his *Diaries*.

Up until he took the leadership in late 2003, the overwhelming impression of Latham's political journey is the sense of destiny he saw in himself. The language he used to promote his agenda was of unashamed social ambition and economic aspiration, and that is why it resonated with voters. The dominant framing device for his policy pronouncements centred on overcoming adversity and getting ahead through a combination of hard work, discipline and responsible citizenship. He was chief among the aspirational voters and these were his convictions.

By way of illustration, he put together a number of themes for the 2004 election campaign. One was his “ladder of opportunity” (discussed in the second part of this case study) of which he said, when asked by a journalist how he came up with the idea, “It comes from who I am and where I've been . . . I've lived it all my life” (Gordon

2004). Another read “Labor is for the people, not the powerful. Campaign as an outsider against the insiders’ Club in Canberra” (Latham 2005a, p. 263). This is Latham placing himself as the central character in the narrative – the boy from the suburbs with the rough edge and vernacular turn of phrase, the conviction politician leading the fight against the elites.

In terms of Research Question 2, Latham did strive to be seen as a conviction politician and he succeeded; in fact, he framed his whole political strategy around it. As one colleague stated, when advocating him for the leadership:

I ended up coming to the view that it was time for Labor to make a bold and decisive choice and a bold and decisive statement about where we stand – and to me Mark represented that. Mark does not leave anyone guessing what he stands for, he has been a conviction politician since day one, and that was why he got my vote.” (Kirsten Livermore in Norington and Banham 2003)

And another:

It has been a wild ride. There've been really good moments, great moments, and Mark brought into the job a real passionate intensity. He's a conviction politician, and he really went after the government. (Craig Emerson in ABC-TV 2005d)

Portraying himself as a conviction politician was certainly successful as far as winning his seat and establishing himself as a leadership contender in the eyes of many in his own party, the media and the general voting population. Whether it helped him once he became leader is moot, and is discussed later in this case study.

Latham took a populist, anti-political approach to reflect varying degrees of negative public attitudes toward conventional politics. Typical of populists around the world he played on the complaints of voters and blamed the nation's elites for causing the hardships. According to a study by Barr (2005) across a number of countries, populists “in all cases” argue that change is needed to “fix the system”. This was Latham – although he described himself as anti-establishment rather than anti-politics, but it amounts to the same thing. Thus, Latham’s efforts and rhetoric, consistent with Barr’s framework, were anti-political, and chief among anti-political strategies is the use of celebrity politics.

Latham was disparaging of what he called the “cult of celebrity” (2005a, p. 15) – yet he became a political celebrity himself, exploiting what Street (2004, p. 435) terms “celebrityhood” to stake his claims. His self-promotion arose from, what seemed to many commentators to be, a national mood for a more hopeful style in politics, as a foil to the powerful ascendancy of John Howard and the inability of previous Labor leaders to dent it. The Coalition Government had struck a chord, particularly with older Australians (Goot and Watson 2007, p. 261; Leigh 2005, pp. 16-18), while Latham presented an attractive and compelling figure to a younger audience, offering a way of cutting through; someone for the media to write up as a “breath of fresh air” (Dodson 2003). For a time at least, Latham’s “crazy-brave” style (Richards 2009) resonated across social strata and demographics, and his populist appeals to public emotion on issues such as fatherhood and preschool education were clearly seductive to many people, including the media, who “lapped him up” (ABC-Radio 2005a).

As many writers saw it (such as Harrison 2004; Richards 2009) after a period in the electoral doldrums for Labor, it seemed like an outsiders’ champion and frustrated aspirational followers – potentially an election-winning alliance – had finally found one another. Many Australian voters at the time, who felt disenchanted with the blandness of what Latham called “whitebread politicians” (Latham 2006), flocked to embrace his innovative rhetoric, his pitch to upwardly-mobile “aspirational”, and his political positioning as an outsider railing against elites and insiders of all kinds. Such were the expectations of Latham’s success that the media was seriously entertaining the prospect of a Latham prime ministership.

The Australian media’s love affair with Opposition Leader Mark Latham is the big political news story ... Pictures of Mark Latham reading to small children; and then Latham standing beside Bob Brown in the Tasmanian forests; Mark Latham putting out the garbage at his western Sydney home; Mark Latham’s man boobs; and Mark and his son Ollie sharing a chip butty. The pic-facs have been endless. (Harrison 2004)

It is an incongruity (one of several in Latham’s political life) that he so desperately wanted to be seen as a “policy wonk” (ABC-Radio 2005a) rather than, like the machine men he hated so much, obsessed with popularity and the media cycle - yet he coveted media attention and manipulated it for his own purposes just as adroitly as any machine

politician. He might deny this, as he does in his *Diaries* and in interviews later (*Enough Rope* ABC-TV 2005a), yet in those same *Diaries* he relates escapades such as autographing a barmaid's breast (2005a, p. 401) or telling a female journalist he is going home to masturbate (2005a, p. 153).

He played the media for shock value; but he also played the celebrity game as well as any modern, third way politician. As Simons (2004), in noting the difference between the policy wonk Latham and the popular culturist Latham, observes, "The man who laments, in *Civilising Global Capital*, the way in which television has eroded civil society has now visited the set of *Big Brother* and even claimed to be a regular viewer. It is sad, but not surprising." He went for the daytime television demographic too, cooking chicken curry on morning TV with *Kerri-Anne*, "... a mission to show the kinder, gentler Latham. And it went pretty well" (Seccombe 2004a) – although he looks less than comfortable with the outdoor segment of the program (Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2 "Mark Latham mucks about with Kerri-Anne Kennerley"

SMH 27 July 2004

He used his considerable speaking abilities, often laced with crudities, to attract media attention. His crudity, in part, is reflected his stated belief that "for the establishment,

civility is a way of preserving the social pecking order” (Latham 2005a, p. 53) but he also saw it as the mark of a populist man-of-the-people, and something to give him the celebrity edge. Consistent with that approach, Latham referred to John Howard in the *Bulletin* (June 2002) as an “arse-licker” [he noted in his *Diaries*, “If anything, I was restrained – Howard has got his tongue up Bush’s clacker that often the poor guy must think he’s got an extra haemorrhoid” (Latham 2005a, p. 195)]; called journalist Janet Albrechtsen during a parliamentary debate (November 2002) a “skanky ho”; and described the Coalition cabinet as “a conga line of suckholes” (February 2003) for their support of the war in Iraq. These were all pre-mediated, it is contended, to attract and maximise media exposure. But these incidents were before he became leader. In December 2003 at his first news conference as leader, he declared:

I've got a new responsibility. I'm the same Mark Latham, but I'm in a new role.  
In that regard, I've got to get the balance right, an inclusive approach. I love  
the larrikin Australian style, but no more crudity. (Latham 2004b)

During 2004 he did make attempts to smooth the rough edges. Polling showed that Latham was less popular with women (Dodson 2004b) so his *Big Brother* and *Kerri-Anne* appearances were designed to soften his image to that demographic.

The conclusion here is that Latham’s manipulated the media adroitly for his own purposes – so much so that he received a “media honeymoon” that lasted for most of his career – yet he despised them, readily dismissed as “Tory dancing bears” (Latham 2005a, p. 288) and as “users who eat people up” (Latham 2005a, p. 207); or contemptuously as “vermin” (Latham 2005b), “maggots” (Latham 2005a, p. 332) and “animals” (Latham 2005a, p. 331).

For several years he was the “go-to” politician in Canberra, perhaps because he was such a contrast to Howard; the prospect of having someone who might be able to beat Howard was someone actually worth writing about, and not for much of the time in a very critical way (Henderson 2005). So despite his views of himself, Mark Latham was the epitomous celebrity politician. He presented as a populist, anti-politician who took advantage of the public’s disaffection with “politics as usual”. As Street (2001) asserts, a media image is the number one asset for a political career, and Latham had it. He was



a popular culture icon, arguably a cult figure – for a while – although he ultimately bit the media hand that fed him.

### **6.5 Research Question 3**

*Are mavericks more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with policy influence and career within the party, or do mavericks have a significant impact on party decision-making and policy formulation?*

This question is formulated from research by Kam (2002) who found that, in the main, party leaders maintain unity because they have control of their MP's career channels (2002, p. 199). Of Latham's political career any reasoned examination could not conclude that he chose popularity over promotion; on the contrary, he was a party careerist from his earliest membership of the ALP and always thought himself destined to be leader and prime minister.

For Latham's early time in parliament he played at least lip-service to the party line and, when he needed to, to the Right faction of the party as well. He understood that without factional support and the support of his mentors, Paul Keating and Gough Whitlam, he would not have the opportunity for promotion. In late 1995 he wrote in his *Diaries*, "For me, probably the best thing to do is ignore them (the NSW Right leadership). Go to their meetings, listen to their crap and do my own stuff anyway" (Latham 2005a, p. 40).

It appears that the ALP needed Latham as much as he needed them. In exchange for a certain amount of party line toeing, he was given some freedom to follow his maverick ways – within limits. The Labor leadership realised that with Latham they had someone with talent, at a time when their electoral stocks were low, particularly after the Keating government was routed in March 1996, losing 31 seats and winning just 49 in a parliament of 148. And Latham knew that to succeed he had to stay close to Labor's influential machine men like veteran chief whip Leo McLeay, who was "keen to advance greenhorns like me through the system" (Latham 2005a, p. 46)

After the 1996 election, Keating left the parliament and the Labor caucus elected Kim Beazley as opposition leader. Beazley elevated Latham to the front bench, making him the shadow minister for competition policy, shadow minister for local government and

assistant to the shadow treasurer. Latham recorded in his *Diaries* (2005a, p. 47) at the time that Beazley told him that he would be the next Labor leader “sitting in this chair eight years from now” (although Latham added as an aside, “... maybe he says that to all the boys”).

He saw the work of a shadow minister as “grinding”. He relates one instance where he circulated the draft of a speech he intended to give on competition policy. The reaction was “hysteria” from treasurer Gareth Evans and “harassment” from Beazley. Under pressure he made the changes they wanted: “I’ve gone from would-be leader to Gareth’s steno. Thanks, Kim” (Latham 2005a, p. 48). This and other instances during Labor’s first term in opposition support Kam’s argument that the leadership’s control over promotion enforces unity within the party. Latham may have followed Beazley’s line through gritted teeth, but follow it he did.

In early 1997 Latham was promoted by Beazley to the education and youth affairs portfolios. He reports that during this period he was becoming unhappy with his role as a Labor frontbencher and that his promotion was a “paradox” (Latham 2005a, p. 56). Latham’s hypocrisy with the media now begins to become apparent. For example, he was happy with the press tagging him as a “rising star” and relished his chance to shadow Amanda Vanstone in education: “My performance measures are simple enough: get on TV and radio ahead of (Democrat education shadow) Natasha Stott Despoja” (Latham 2005a, p. 61). And he is delighted with his appearance on the front cover of the *SMH Good Weekend* magazine in September 1997, a “blockbuster piece, putting the weights on me as a future Labor Leader and Prime Minister” (Latham 2005a, p. 66). Yet at the same time he notes in his *Diaries* that the modern media has “degenerated into just another form of commerce and infotainment” (Latham 2005a, p. 59).

In 1998 his marriage with Gabrielle Gwyther ended coincidentally about the same time that *Civilising Global Capital* was published. The book was launched in March (interestingly by Kim Beazley, considering Latham’s views of him at the time expressed in the *Diaries*) to mainly good newspaper reviews and seemed to be the catalyst for the maverick Latham to begin to overshadow the party-line Latham. Relative political novices writing books on economic and social policy is not a common occurrence in Australia, and it helped lift Latham’s profile, particularly with journalists

who began to realise they had something different in the member for Werriwa. Latham, it appears, was starting to believe what was being written about him.

But although Latham was happy to toe the party line and invite Beazley to launch his book, in private he was railing against his leader. Chief of his concerns was a belief that Beazley's office was undermining him, "tipping dirt" on him around the press gallery (Latham 2005a, p.79) over rumours he was sexually harassing women. As the October election approached, Latham became increasingly disillusioned with Beazley over his perceived "backgrounding" of the media, and his policy positions (or lack of them, as Latham saw it) on tariff and industry reform. Latham also believed that another Labor star, the Democrat defector Cheryl Kernot, was to get his education portfolio if Labor won government. In his *Diaries* at the time Latham dubbed Kernot "Princess Cheryl", Gareth Evans and Beazley her "fawning courtiers" and the three together the "Labor Royal Family" (2005a, p. 71).

In many ways, during his time as a frontbencher under Beazley, Latham's more rebellious tendencies were constrained and he was by and large an effective team player, although as 1998 unfolded he became increasing maverick and increasingly frustrated with the official Labor line. Matters came to a head in September during the election campaign. Beazley's office re-wrote Labor's education policy which Latham had spent months preparing – his "sculpture smashed to pieces". The had him "trapped", he wrote, because the re-worked policy was released without referral back to him, but he "put on a brave face" at the launch (Latham 2005a, p.84). He made the decision then, he says, to leave the front bench "win, lose or draw this election".

Without freedom of enquiry, research and expression, you are only half a person. I've got to find a way of enjoying my politics again. The power of ideas and truth outweighs any ministerial pretensions I might have had. I've got to find the strength to get outside the system. (Latham 2005a, p. 84)

So after the election in October 1998 (which Labor lost), Latham returned to the backbench. He stayed there for three years, not getting the call again until Simon Crean replaced Beazley as leader after the 2001 election loss. Latham still harboured career aspirations, but he seemed to believe he needed time to establish himself with the Australian voters. He wrote weekly columns for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Australian Financial Review* – "This way I'll have all the bases covered: the pointy-

head audience in the Fin and the mob who read the Tele. An ideal opportunity for political agitation from the backbench” (Latham 2005a, p. 91).

Research Question 3 asks if the maverick puts electoral popularity above career. That is not a choice Mark Latham had to make as there was really no doubt, certainly from himself and also with most colleagues and observers, that his stints on the backbench were more about positioning himself for later tilts at advancement – “agitation and freedom” (Latham 2005a, p. 174) – rather than purely to remain popular with his electorate. Nevertheless, Kam’s central claim, that the leader enforces unity with control over the perks of office, is supported. Latham was at his most maverick when he spurned career advancement and went to the backbench, and on his best party behaviour on the front bench, particularly under Crean’s leadership (2001-2003) where he accepted that re-call meant a moderation of his maverick ways.

Despite our many past differences, he [Crean] was willing to support me, providing I became a team player. In effect he placed me on probation: ‘Nobody doubts your ability, just your loyalty to the team. I’ll back you, but the first sign that you are playing up again, you’ll be back out.’ That suits me fine. I’m sick of writing newspaper articles and stuffing around on the sidelines. If Crean is willing to give me a chance, then I’m willing to leave the past behind. (Latham 2005s, p. 175)

There are many examples of Latham’s policy influence on the Labor Party up until he took the leadership. For instance, in his first major policy book *Civilising Global Capital*, published in April 1998 during his first term on the Labor front bench, the subtitle to the book, *New Thinking for Australian Labor*, sets the scene for a detailed re-working of traditional Labor Party politics. In the book he argued that Labor needed to abandon many of its traditional policies and embrace the aspirational values (home ownership, further education) of the upwardly-mobile suburbanites and small business sector. The traditional Labor ideals of equality of outcomes in education are abandoned in favour of “an education environment within which the innate qualities of each individual are developed to their maximum skill and cognitive potential” (Latham 1998, p. 237). He advocated such radical (from Labor’s perspective) reforms as more freedom for and competition between schools, including closing down schools “which fail to add value to the learning capabilities of their students” (Latham 1998, p. 243).

Latham had put many of his education reform ideas into his election policy document that Beazley and Evans had so cruelly, from Latham's viewpoint, "butchered" on election eve a few months after the launch of *Global Capital*. In short, Latham's education thesis centred on a demand-side approach where big government and mass welfare is replaced with not only individual empowerment and opportunity, but also individual responsibility. These views alienated him from many Labor traditionalists, particularly on the Left, but his aggressive parliamentary style won him many admirers at the time, and his advocacy eventually helped influence mainstream ALP policy.

Although Latham left politics in 2005, Labor in government from 2007 took an approach to education in some way close to Latham's call for the need to replace big government with the devolution of power. For example, Labor brought in legislation to provide for a "fundamental shift" in higher education, moving to a student centred system of funding (Gillard 2009). The Bill allowed universities to decide how many places they will offer in various courses, and phased out the previous cap system. It also funds universities to develop "partnership programs" with low social economic status schools, to improve education access to poorer students.

How much impact did Latham's ideas, agitations, publications and lobbying have on Labor policy? Of course he was a shadow minister twice, 1996-98 and 2001-03, and leader during 2004, so a policy contribution during those times is clear. Beyond that, it is always difficult to be specific as political decision making rarely comes with a label that gives credit beyond the minister making the announcement. His legacy is that he did force the Labor Party to think about and reevaluate its traditional, collectivist ideals.

The Rudd Labor government that eventually triumphed in 2007, when the rhetoric is peeled away, took a third way approach. Rudd was no neo-liberal, nor was Latham, and neither rejected Labor's social demographic roots, but both saw market-based economic policies as the best vehicle for equality of opportunity. Kevin Rudd, in a much reported essay (Rudd 2009), speculated that the dominant economic and social paradigm, post the 2008 global financial crisis, might be called "social capitalism" or "social democratic capitalism". He says it will be defined by an activist state and open markets (Rudd 2009). This is very much Latham's language.

This is not to suggest that the Rudd or Gillard Labor governments were a mirror for Mark Latham's ideology – far from it. Latham's view espoused in *From the Suburbs*, that communities should be rebuilt as a social and moral project, is not central to current Labor thinking and there is no indication that Labor under Julia Gillard is about to dismantle the welfare state the way that Latham proposed in that book (2003a, p. 83). Rudd, Gillard and Latham are all Keynesians, supporting a mix of intervention and the open market (Kelly 2009).

The conclusion is that Latham did have an impact – a major impact – on his party's policies. Many in the Labor Party and the media, as the discussion in the second part of this case study will show, look back at Mark Latham's political contribution as leader, and Latham personally, with distaste. But for all his personality failings (and they were definitely there) there is no doubt that Latham had a major impact on the Labor party and on Labor party policy. A few writers take a more perspicacious view than that of the prevailing journalist and media commentary. Johnson, for example, observes that Latham was “amongst the most intellectually prolific of Labor politicians” (2004, p. 1); and, as one Liberal Party critic said of *Global Capital*, “The book is a rich mine of ideas. Some of them may be fool's gold, but there remain many seams to be exploited, and the overall result is an enrichment of political debate in Australia” (Goldsmith 1998).

## **6.6 Latham's leadership, December 2003 to January 2005**

The first part to this case study focuses on Mark Latham's life up until December 2003, while this part takes a closer look at the 13 months from then to January 2005 – the period Latham was Labor leader. The primary purpose here is to answer one important question: can a maverick be a successful leader of a political party? Intuitively, he or she cannot. The definition of a maverick developed in Chapter 2 must render “maverick party leader” an oxymoron, because a maverick *is* unpredictable, independent, non-conformist, a loner, an outsider, and, above all, cannot be relied upon to follow the party line: in short, the antithesis of a leader. Does Latham debunk the logic and successfully combine the two? The answer is no. Initially his maverickism, as the first part of the following discussion shows, did boost his and his party's appeal and it seemed that the maverick and leader, even the maverick and prime minister, could be the one person; but eventually Latham failed as a leader, both electorally and

personally, and the party went back to “safe” leadership choices in Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard.

Latham had a taste of leadership earlier as mayor of Liverpool. He was certainly a maverick during that time, pushing through significant change, including outsourcing of services and a large increase in spending on capital projects. According to Scala (2004) he got things done: he was frenetic and demanding, a “whirlwind mayor”. Latham himself felt that he had to “break down the establishment” and the way the council was run (McGregor 2004, p. 50). Ten years later, when he was Labor leader, allegations of mismanagement and fiscal ineptitude as mayor were raised in parliament by John Howard and treasurer Peter Costello in an effort to discredit his economic management credentials in an election year (Blewett 2004-2005). Scala (2004) makes the point that his time as mayor at Liverpool mattered when he became a contender for prime minister because it was the only time in his work life that Latham, who had never been a minister, had “run anything”.

In conjunction with Howard’s and Costello’s attacks, in May 2004 the Liberal Party circulated to the press a 54-page dossier criticising Latham’s record at Liverpool, painting him as a big-spending, high-taxing administrator (Schubert 2004b). Latham was accused of engaging in a \$36 million spending spree, property rate increases and leaving the council in massive debt. His official response was given in parliament in June, when he declared that he left the council budget in surplus to the tune of \$1.6 million and reduced the council’s debt servicing ratio from 17.2 percent to 10 percent as a result (Holland and Head 2004). He also said that, under his leadership, Liverpool had adopted a debt-retirement strategy that he claimed would have made it debt-free by 2005, but which was not implemented by his successors. Latham declared in his *Diaries*: “The truth is, I couldn’t have driven the council harder for economic savings and efficiencies: I got rid of the bludging staff, got massive savings from contractors, busted open the old, self-serving club” (2005a, p. 288).

But the political damage was done. The Liberals developed several negative advertisements based on their view of Latham’s time at the Liverpool Council, and used them with effect during the 2004 election campaign to attack his economic management credentials.

Simons (2004), from her investigation of the period, concluded that there were real issues in the financial management of the council, mostly related to the drafting of the outsourcing agreements. She believed that Latham “had been deceptively selective in his use of figures” in his parliamentary response; although she notes his contributions to the city in the areas of welfare, employment, health, taxation, and education, and finds it “hard to imagine Liverpool without the capital works Latham built” (Simons 2004). Whatever the truth of the allegations against Latham, his term did lead to upheaval and change at the council. Those who followed him failed spectacularly: the Liverpool Council was sacked by the state government in March 2004 over the bungling of a \$900 million development. Much bad-blood remains between Latham and many of the people he was connected with at Liverpool.

**The Ladder of Opportunity.** The Labor Party turned to Mark Latham at a time when its electoral stocks were low. After 13 years in power it was tipped out of government in 1996 by John Howard’s Liberal/National coalition, and then lost the next two elections in 1998 and 2001 under the leadership of Kim Beazley. After the 2001 defeat, Simon Crean took over as leader, but by the end of 2003 the opinion polls pointed to almost certain defeat at the next election, due anytime during 2004. These dire circumstances prompted Beazley to start testing the numbers in caucus for another leadership challenge. Crean stepped aside in the face of media pressure for him to go and, in the knowledge that Beazley was about to challenge, threw his support behind Latham. Mark Latham defeated Kim Beazley in the ensuing caucus ballot by two votes, 47-45.

As the previous discussion shows, during his time as a parliamentarian Latham had become something of a media favourite, and his elevation to leader was largely received positively (Adams 2003). Not without some reservations and qualifications, though. For example: the *Canberra Times* (2003) saw the choice between Latham and Beazley as “uncomfortable” but also that the caucus needed to show “guts” and select Latham; journalist and writer, Peter Botsman (2004, p.11), “The question for Latham is whether the excitement [he has] generated will translate into electoral success ... the answer at this stage is very pessimistic”; and the right-leaning Piers Akerman (2004) saw him as just a “party hack who clawed his way through the ranks ...” [Although it should be noted that Botsman may have had an axe to grind. Latham had him sacked as



executive director of the Whitlam Institute in 2002 (Ramsey 2004) for writing an unfavourable, in Latham's mind, review of him in a newspaper.]

At his first press conference as leader on 2 December 2003, Latham showed his media savviness and his ability to parlay his growing celebrity credentials. As Keane (2002, p. 13) notes, successful politicians have the ability to reflect the interests of people who do not identify with traditional political communication, and it was at this press conference that Latham unveiled his Ladder of Opportunity (Latham 2003b), the epitomous anti-politician statement. The "Ladder" was a master-stroke in political marketing, full of metaphors and allusions aimed at the aspirational voter:

Now some people today of course will be asking, "who is Mark Latham and what does he stand for?" Well I stand for the things that I've been doing all my life - working hard trying to climb that ladder of opportunity, working hard, studying hard. I believe in an upwardly mobile society where people can climb the rungs of opportunity, climbing the ladder of opportunity to a better life for themselves and their family. I believe in hard work. I believe in reward for effort. I believe in a Government that is there to help the people who are doing the right thing - the people who are getting stuck in, doing things the fair dinkum Australian way. (Latham 2003b)

The Ladder of Opportunity catch-phrase resonated immediately and worked to quickly establish in the media's mind that Latham was as a potential alternative prime minister (Smith 2004). "Latham rocks, Howard reels", as one senior journalist wrote (Grattan 2004a). In those early weeks of his leadership, Latham successfully incorporated three key factors into his political messages. First, he recognised that "middle Australia", after a decade of economic prosperity, had moved on from its working-class ideals of income equality and state paternalism which were more part of "old" Labor traditions, to "aspirational" middle-class values of reward for effort, quality of life, social mobility, consumerism and personal fulfilment – and he framed his messages to reflect these voters' aspirations. In many ways Latham accepted the "rationally ignorant" perspective of the median Australian voter, expounded here earlier in Chapter 2. It was something he bemoaned frequently in his *Diaries*, but he understood that voters largely make decisions from a position of self-interest, and that the vote choice is often irrational, selective and based on emotion and imagery: "For the apathetic, disillusioned

middle ground, politics is a nuisance, a silly game of word association. See a few ads, must be true, that'll do me" (Latham 2005a).

Second, he personalised his approach by incorporating human-interest elements into his messages, what he termed "personal connections" (Latham 2005a, p. 262), such as reading to children, employee-family relationships, and the role of parenting, in particular the identity of fathers and fathering (Burchell 2005). The Coalition feared Latham's policies of encouraging early childhood learning and bonding between parents and their children would be difficult to oppose (Dodson 2004a). The personalised approach, Grattan (2004a) observed, grabbed people's attention and humanised Latham's narrative.

His third tactic, and perhaps the most telling, was to project himself into the Ladder of Opportunity allegory, claiming that his successes and his values were the embodiment of the Ladder. In effect, Latham presented as a actor – a celebrity – in his own melodrama. As one commentator (Carney 2004) noted, Latham played "ego politics". His personal style was brash, and he sought unashamedly to promote his background as a policy template. At the Labor national conference in late January 2004 he told the delegates that his (by then) much-quoted Ladder of Opportunity had come from his own suburb of Green valley. "It comes from who I am and where I've been ... I believe it because I have lived it" (Latham 2004a). Few Australian political leaders, in Carney's (2004) view had so "extravagantly and comprehensively" outlined the connection between their own life experience and their political beliefs.

Latham's leadership and electioneering style was something the journalists and commentators were not familiar with and they found it exciting. As Stone (2006, p. 41) observed, he became "overnight the darling of almost all our media." There was serious speculation that Latham had wrong-footed the more dour and conventional Howard, and that Labor would be swept into government at the ensuing election. For its part, the Howard government targeted Mark Latham's brash personality and his colourful past. Howard's treasurer, Peter Costello attempted to damage Latham's economic credentials by referring to the experimental economic ideas that he had put forward as shadow treasurer, such as abolishing negative gearing and replacing the GST with a progressive expenditure tax. Frequent references were made to Mark Latham's temper, such as the allegation that some years earlier he broke a taxi-driver's arm in a scuffle over a fare

dispute. However, Latham was uncharacteristically calm in the face of these attacks, surprising many members of the media.

Less than three years ago, this man was in self-imposed exile, regarded by some colleagues as maverick or mad. Less than three months ago, he was the shadow treasurer his frontbench critics thought had been bested by Peter Costello. Now he's the Great Chance, even if Labor will need quite a few four-leaf clovers to turn its new Sensation into lasting salvation. (Grattan 2004a)

More electorally favourable announcements flowed in the first few weeks. Latham declared that a Labor government would abolish the generous superannuation schemes available to members of parliament; his plan was quickly adopted by the Howard government in the face of a rising wave of public support. Other policies and initiatives included: the introduction of federal government parenting classes for parents deemed to be failing to adequately discipline their children; a ban on food and drink advertising during children's television viewing hours; the introduction of a national youth mentoring program; the government distribution of free story books to the families of newborn children; a federal ban on plastic shopping bags; and the introduction of legislation to prohibit vilification on the basis of religious beliefs or sexual orientation. Some of these initiatives prompted Howard to criticise Latham as a "behavioural policeman".

Latham was winning the public relations battle (Scala 2004). By March 2004, Labor had taken the lead over the Coalition in the opinion polls, and Mark Latham had a higher personal approval rating than any opposition leader since Bob Hawke in 1983. It appeared that the maverick could maintain his maverick ways and also be a party leader. After the national conference in his *Diaries* Latham exclaims, "How good is this? ... the Sun Herald headlining 'Book Mark' on its front page, a successful ALP National Conference behind me. So far, things have been too easy" (Latham 2005a, p. 264).

**Honeymoon over.** Things started to turn against the Latham juggernaut in April 2004. Following the Spanish elections at which the pro-American People's Party government was defeated, Latham sparked a controversy by committing a Labor government to the withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq by Christmas. At that time, Australia had about 850 troops in Iraq, mostly involved in patrol work and in training members of the

new Iraqi defence forces. Howard accused Mark Latham of a "cut and run" approach and said "it's not the Australian way not to stay the distance". U.S. President Bush described Latham's plan as "disastrous".

Then in June, Latham announced the recruitment of Peter Garrett, president of the Australian Conservation Foundation and former lead singer with the rock band Midnight Oil, as a Labor candidate in Kingsford Smith, a safe Sydney electorate to be vacated by a retiring former minister. Many commentators regarded Garrett's recruitment as a high-risk tactic, seeing the potential advantage to Labor of Garrett's popularity among young people being offset by the possibility that his record of radical and anti-American statements in the past would offend moderate voters. To compound matters, Latham's opponents discovered that Garrett had not been on the electoral roll and therefore had not voted at the last three elections (it is illegal in Australia to both not be enrolled and not vote), resulting in more bad press for Latham and journalists starting to query his judgement (Secombe 2004b). Like most modern day politicians, Latham tried to capitalise on an association with a show-business celebrity, but in this case the negatives may have outweighed the positives.

More controversy followed a few weeks later. Claims were made by a commercial television network that Latham had punched a political rival over ten years earlier during his time on Liverpool Council. Latham strongly denied the accusation, but coming so soon after the taxi driver allegations, it allowed the Coalition to brand Latham as an aggressive loose cannon. On 6 July, he called a press conference and denounced the government for maintaining what he called a "dirt unit," which he said was gathering personal material about him, including details of his first marriage. This appeared to be a tactical error by Latham as it allowed government ministers to highlight Latham's own abusive behaviours:

Of all the people in Australian politics, Mark Latham would be the last person to complain about being criticised," he told ABC radio. "He has been one of the most vitriolic and abusive politicians that I have known in my nearly 20 years in Parliament. (Alexander Downer in Schubert 2004a)

Whether underhand tactics were employed or not is moot, but there is no doubt that Howard's strategy was to paint Latham as inconsistent and dangerous, someone who could not be trusted with important issues such as economic management (Dodson

2004a). Howard used Latham's maverick credentials, which up until this point were seen as an asset, as a weapon with which to attack him.

By the end of July, Latham's position in the opinion polls had steadily declined, leading to renewed speculation that Howard would soon call the election. Commentators were starting to speculate that Latham's perceived shortcomings – his temper, his inexperience particularly with economic management, and his maverick behaviour – were beginning to resonate with voters. Latham had started to worry himself about “the loss of the ladder identity, the way it had faded from the electorate's mind” (Latham 2005a, p. 326). However, in early August, Labor claimed a tactical victory over the government on the issue of the U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement and there were allegations in a Senate inquiry that Howard had lied about the "Children Overboard Affair" during the 2001 election campaign. By mid-August, Labor was again just ahead in all three national opinion polls.

**The campaign and the election.** On Sunday 29 August 2004, John Howard called the election for Saturday 9 October, a relatively long six-week campaign. On the morning of 8 October, the day before ballot day, a television crew filmed Latham and Howard shaking hands as they crossed paths outside a radio studio in Sydney. The footage showed Latham appearing to draw Howard aggressively towards him and tower over his shorter opponent. The incident received wide media coverage and, while Latham claimed to have been attempting to get revenge for Howard squeezing his wife's hand too hard at a press function, it was variously reported as being "aggressive", "bullying" and "intimidating" on the part of Latham (Henderson 2004, p. 15). The Liberal Party campaign director, Brian Loughnane, later said this incident generated more feedback to Liberal headquarters than anything else during the six-week campaign, and that it "brought together all the doubts and hesitations that people had about Mark Latham" (Gilmore 2004). Latham disputes the impact of this incident, however, describing it as a "Tory gee-up" (Latham 2005a, p. 369).



Figure 6.3 “PM can't shake: Latham” AAP 27 October 2004

Whatever the effect of any one incident or occurrence, John Howard's "who do you trust?" campaign, outlined in Chapter 2, successfully encapsulated for the voter everything that was “right” about himself and “wrong” about Mark Latham.

Although opinion polls showed the ALP and the government swapping the lead throughout the campaign, the Liberal/National Coalition was re-elected with an increased majority. In the days after the election Latham was criticised for releasing many key policies too late, a case in point was Labor's policy regarding conservation of Tasmanian old growth forests (Henderson 2004). Labor's party president, Carmen Lawrence, blamed the unexpected severity of the defeat on an effective Coalition "scare campaign" which focused television advertisements on Latham's limited economic management experience, and the alleged threat of a rise in interest rates under Labor. Latham (2005a, p. 372) felt these advertisements were not effectively countered by ALP National Secretary and campaign head, Tim Gartrell. Latham wrote in his *Diaries* that he had told his wife Janine that "I've tried to carry the whole show on my shoulders: my family, my community, my party. But now I'm stuffed. I have collapsed under the weight of those fucking ads" (Latham 2005a, p. 339).

Labor's defeat led to media criticisms of Latham's personal style and policy priorities, and also to a crisis in confidence in his leadership within the Labor caucus (Brent 2004, 2005a; Grattan 2004d, 2004b). Several prominent members of the front-bench, notably John Faulkner, Lindsay Tanner and Bob McMullan, chose to reject front-bench positions in the post-election shadow cabinet. Latham also had a heated public confrontation with the Labor deputy leader in the Senate, Stephen Conroy, renewing speculation there would be a challenge to Latham's leadership in the new year. The final crisis for Latham's leadership erupted after the December 2007 tsunami in Indonesia.

With both Latham and his deputy leader, Jenny Macklin, on leave, the acting opposition leader, Senator Chris Evans, was left to issue statements on behalf of the ALP. Latham was criticised for not issuing a statement as leader personally, particularly at a time when John Howard expressed national sympathy over the disaster, pledged billion in aid to Indonesia and declared a national day of mourning. Latham rejected the criticism, saying "none of my verbiage could make any practical difference - bring back the dead, reverse the waves, organise the relief effort."

Several days later, Latham announced he had been ordered to rest as a result of a recurrence of pancreatitis. It was subsequently alleged that during the period of his sick-leave he had been seen at a resort with his family. Latham's colleagues in turn became increasingly angry over his failure to communicate with them or to release a full statement about his health. Opinion polls in January showed a sharp decline in Latham's support and a preference for the return of Beazley as Labor leader. On 18 January, citing "life-threatening" illness and family concerns, Latham announced his resignation from the Labor Party leadership and the House of Representatives.

He delivered his resignation speech in almost surreal circumstances, in a small suburban park at Ingleburn in Sydney. He drove to the park alone, parked the car, walked the short distance to the gathered media pack, read a short prepared statement in which he gave three reasons for retiring: health, family and media intrusion – then left without answering questions but abusing members of the media in his path. "I remember being taken aback by Mr Latham's aggression," wrote one journalist later. "There was so much anger and hatred, it seemed to linger in the air like a nasty smell" (Speers 2010). According to Richards (2009) he looked "miserable, pathetic and

distinctly unwell.” But that is not how Latham describes the event in his *Diaries*. It was his “freedom day” and he said he felt calm and determined.

I organised it for Ingleburn mid-afternoon to make the animals scurry away from the front of our home. No elitism here, just a suburban park, finishing things the way I started it. Basic, austere, very common ... Enjoyed watching the media reaction: falling over themselves, rolling around at the ground, wetting themselves with excitement, little boys and girls at play. (Latham 2005a, p. 411).

## 6.7 Case study conclusions

Latham had been federal Labor leader for 13 months, the shortest tenure since Billy Hughes was expelled from the party in 1916. Latham was just the second federal Labor leader, after Matthew Charlton in 1928, to leave politics without ever having held ministerial office. He failed in that he did not win an election, and there is no argument from anyone, Latham included, that he and his party in the end could not accommodate each other.

Latham never stopped his maverick behaviour during his tenure as leader: in the end, he rejected the party and the party rejected him. The conclusion must be from this case study that maverickism and leadership could not coexist. But that is not to say that the Latham “experiment” itself was without positives. It is apparent that much of the treatment of Mark Latham and his legacy has been one of political and media revision. As one commentator observed (Raue 2009b), the writing in hindsight seems to paint 2004 as a crazy year when the entire ALP caucus went “collectively insane and selected a lunatic as leader who ran around the country tearing the place apart, before everyone woke up and saw Latham for what he was.”

The problem with this interpretation is that, as this case study illustrates, Latham was an immensely popular figure throughout his parliamentary career who made a demonstrable contribution to his party, and who, during his time as leader, had Labor well ahead of the coalition in the polls for much of that time. According to opinion polling, Latham was one of the most popular political leaders since the Second World War, and even on election day in October, when Howard had clawed back into the polling lead, the media commentators were not certain that Howard would win.



Both major parties and much of the political media has conveniently spent the last five years rubbing out the history of the 2004 election campaign. The reason that Latham and his political record have been so harshly maligned is that Latham himself has been so relentlessly bitter in his denigration of nearly everyone – colleagues, political opponents, journalists – since he left politics. In other words, Latham has set himself up for others to tear him down. There seems no doubt that Latham, in his *Diaries* and also in his fortnightly *Australian Financial Review* columns – “Australia’s most rancorous parliamentary pensioner” according to Crabb (2009) – is playing an often cruel game of revenge. His *Diaries*, Latham admits, are an “uncut commentary” and “very raw” (2005a, p. 2) and this adds to the power that comes from his brutal assessments. Sometimes the humour and observations are crude and sexist, and these are what his critics focus on, but this ignores the political substance of Latham’s time in office.

The political journalist class has largely found it convenient to run with the “crazy Latham” meme as an antidote to their embarrassing fawning over Latham during the 2004 campaign. It probably didn’t hurt that Latham didn’t pull any punches regarding the media in his 2005 diaries, giving them little motivation to treat his arguments and legacy fairly and much motivation to discredit his diaries and the opinions within. Usually such strident criticism of the political establishment by a former federal leader of a major party would be considered a key political document. Instead most who haven’t read the book would consider *The Latham Diaries* to be a crazy rant with little value. (Raue 2009b)

Insofar as the Liberals are concerned, they have a political advantage in the revision of Latham as a dangerous lunatic, as it allows them to criticise the ALP for the misjudgement in electing him as leader and then following his lead during the election campaign. As for the ALP, they also have strong reasons to paint the Latham experiment as Latham’s own fault, as it deflects blame from the rest of the party members: “Given the casual consensus among much of the Labor caucus, even on the eve of his election to its leadership, that he was a talented maniac, it remains a wonder of modern politics that he was ever made leader” (Age-Editorial 2005).

Was he a mad man who ran amok? It is not the task here to decide on Mark Latham’s mental state. Certainly, many writers have commented on this. His chief of staff for most of his time as leader, Mike Richards, who was sacked on election eve, claims that

Latham did have a clinical disorder, a narcissistic and paranoid personality. The core features, according to Richards, are a distinctive political brilliance and drive that is accompanied by paranoia and destructive tendencies – anger, rage, envy and resentment – which suggest an inner dynamic involving ambition compensating for low self-esteem (Richards 2009).

Latham's personal style probably did not make it easy to be his colleague, and perhaps another leader, such as Kim Beazley, may have done better at the election. Yet it cannot be ignored that, for a number of months in 2004, Latham did fire the imagination of the media and many Australian voters. But he lost the election after establishing a big opinion poll lead nonetheless: how much of that 2004 loss can be put down to his personality flaws? It is true that a lot of what Richards has to say makes sense; but the question also has to be asked, how many politicians fit these criteria? Narcissism, paranoia and a lot of the other symptoms described by Richards appear to be typical of many successful politicians. And Richards too is not a detached observer and has his own axe to grind against Latham.

Labor lost the 2004 election but it is impossible, and unfair, to attribute that loss solely to Latham's maverickism, and that is not the intention here. There are many and varying views on why the election was lost. According to Goot and Watson (2007, p. 268) there was "little doubt" that interest rates was the deciding issue. McAllister and Bean (2006, p. 616), on the other hand, dismiss interest rates as having any direct impact, preferring Howard's relative familiarity as the key. Their view is that voters did not necessarily see Latham as an electoral liability, they had simply not made up their minds about him, as they had with Howard.

Both authors have a valid point. Howard owned the issues more central to voters' concerns, and he was relatively more popular than his opponent. Those two attributes, issue ownership and popularity (the latter discussed here in terms of conviction and celebrity credentials), are the factors by which nearly all elections are determined, and the contest in 2004 between Howard and Latham was no different. The weakening of partisanship in Australia has meant that voters have come to rely more on the reputation of the leaders to guide their vote choice. The importance of leadership in shaping electoral outcomes gave the Liberals a distinct advantage in John Howard, who had

remained remarkably popular since winning the 1996 election (McAllister 2003, p. 275).

In modern Australian elections leadership is one critical element among many and in the end the conclusion must be that the Australian electorate would not accept a maverick as prime minister. The indications are that they want their leaders to be safe and predictable. Some critics (Lagan 2005a; MaCallum 2005) believe Latham could have been successful if he had more time as opposition leader, or stayed around to contest the next election, but the evidence from Latham's behaviour does not support that view. There has been much revision of Latham's 2004 leadership year, much of it not warranted or not supported by the facts, but it appears clear to this study that Latham the maverick was always going to adopt the "crash through or crash" approach. He had his shot, then after that was not interested. His reclusive behaviour and his writings since indicate that he never saw himself as being around for the long haul if he could not be a winner.

Mark Latham's appeal and difficulties stemmed from the same source: he was a true outsider. Not in the sense of the suburban outsider he romanticises about in his writings, but an outsider within his party, a maverick. As a maverick he was never popular with the ALP establishment, and his political behaviour, despite his broad policies fitting in with a neoliberal economic agenda largely adopted by his successor Kevin Rudd, challenged the way politics was done in the Labor Party. The political success factors developed in Chapter 2 offer an appropriate, concluding reference.

**Issue ownership.** Petrocik's (1996) theory of issue ownership holds that there is an advantage to the candidate that presents as the best "fixer" of issues important to the electorate. Determining these issues is an inexact task as voters themselves often do not think about politics in an objective or rational way. Latham hit an electoral chord with his family and community values debate early in his leadership but, it could be argued that, as election day approached, voters turned to more prosaic issues such as interest rates and the economy generally, issues that John Howard clearly owned.

In any assessment, Howard was effective at framing the debate on to these issues. The inference is that Australian voters are risk averse, something which McAllister and Bean (2006, p. 619) recognise as a factor at 2004 election. Mavericks, by their nature,

represent a risk and the electorate when it comes to their homes and their jobs, will not take a chance on a maverick prime minister. As Colebatch (2004) puts it, “Hatred, a potty mouth and *Apocalypse Now* hardly seem elements we need in an Australian Prime Minister in a turbulent and challenging international and economic environment.”

**Conviction.** The case was made in Chapter 2 that voters prefer candidates that are true to their convictions. Latham remained a conviction politician to the end; he rarely wavered from his core policies, but he still failed. Why? The answer might be that Latham also presented as a walking paradox, perhaps a result of his personality: he wanted acceptance as a policy wonk but also as a popularist; he hated attacks on himself and his family, yet savaged his opponents personally on any whim; he wanted to be seen as both working class and intellectual; he was convinced he was one of the suburban outsiders, but he was also adept at insider machine politics; he despised the media but also played the media game to his own advantage when it suited him; he hated Kim Beazley, but used him too; he claimed to be a plain talker but could be as Machiavellian as any politician.

All that talent, ambition, vision on the one side of the ledger. All that anger, vindictiveness and loneliness on the other. A man who seemed to balance on a knife edge between political greatness and political disaster. And who was pushed over that edge, in large measure, by the working through of his own ‘fatal flaws’. (Burchell 2005)

In short, and to be frank, much of Latham’s political communication was pure invective, “immature and infantile” according to veteran commentator Max Teichmann (in Colebatch 2004), and it is difficult to conclude otherwise. He may have held consistent policy views, but in his political activity it was impossible to know exactly who Mark Latham was or how he would behave. The Chapter 2 discussion on conviction recognised that voters wanted politicians they could trust to act in a predictable manner, and hold predictable views. There is a reason, argues Brent (2010a), that four out of every five Australian federal elections have seen the government returned: “It’s not a fluke. It’s the value of incumbency. Incumbency is an asset at first, but over the years becomes a liability.”

Therefore, in Australia the electoral choice is usually between a prime minister - who electors feel they know and, for all their faults, feel comfortable with - against an

untried opposition. If voters are ready discard the incumbent the opposition will win if it is electable. Electable opposition leaders, experience indicates, are small target, acceptable, competent and bland. They are not “conviction politicians” and do not put on a big show. They do not need to be inspiring or popular (Brent 2010a).

Latham’s complex character meant that he was easily portrayed as unstable and volatile by his political opponents, which meant voters were never convinced of his *leadership* conviction credentials. Or, more charitably, a newspaper editorial summed Latham up this way: “In the end it came down to two things: trust and fear. People were interested in the new young Labor leader, but they weren't anywhere near ready to trust him” (Sun-Herald 2004).

**Celebrity.** The discussion in Chapter 2 made claims that politicians will seek “star power” (‘t Hart and Tindall 2009, p. 4) and make use of the artefacts, icons and expertise of popular culture (Street 2004, p. 437) to maximise their appeal to the electorate. The evidence indicates that Mark Latham took celebrity politics too far. Whether it was his intention or not, he became too much the media darling; they saw in him far more than he could deliver, and in the end the fall from celebrity grace was very hard.

In placing so much of a personal investment in his Ladder of Opportunity, by making himself the key actor in that play, he focussed the media spotlight directly on to all aspects of his life. If Latham wanted to use his own life experiences as the embodiment of the Ladder’s success, then the public had some right to lay bare other aspects of his life too; or as the media saw it, he “invited all of Australia into his life for a look around” (Age-Editorial 2005). For example, on Fathers’ Day in 2004 he invited the media into his backyard for a photo opportunity with his two sons (Cuming 2006), yet he hated the continued media spotlight on his children and hated the public’s fascination with his private life; he never realised there is a price to pay for wanting to personalise his political messages. As all popular culture celebrities know it is impossible to pick-and-choose media attention. Latham invited the public to see in him how success could be made; he could not expect them not to be interested in his failings too.

## 7 Conclusions

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the cross-case analysis and presents the conclusions of the thesis. As pointed out in Chapter 3, each case is written to a uniform research framework in order to minimise errors and biases and to strengthening the reliability of the conclusions. Central to this is that each research question is addressed in each case study. Eisenhardt (1989) suggests that between four and ten case subjects are desirable for theory building, while Yin (2002, p. 30) similarly advocates that more replications give greater certainty.

Thus the consistent, multiple-case approach used here allows for cross-case analysis and comparison, and the investigation of the research questions in diverse settings where (as in this study of political mavericks) the existing scholarly literature is limited (Cavaye 1996; Darke et al. 1998). However, as Yin (2002, p. 31) is careful to emphasise, multiple cases are not to be seen as statistical sampling units; rather, a mechanism whereby previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of each case study.

This chapter considers each of the research questions in turn, drawing on the findings from the case studies to derive relevant cross-case inferences. To conclude the chapter, some observations and implications for theory are made, any deficiencies in the body of knowledge that remain are discussed, and the implications for any future research identified.

### 7.2 Research Question 1 findings

*Are Mavericks electorally successful because they are adept at owning, framing and promising to address the issues important to their constituents?*

This research question anticipates a “campaign effect”; that is an alignment of the policy agenda of a candidate with that of the voter. The influential research of Petrocik (1996) found that candidates are identified by the problems that they emphasise and that elections are, in effect, as Mark Latham pointed out (AAP 2010), a “marketing exercise”. Petrocik found three general expectations were supported by an issue ownership interpretation of an election. First, voters perceive differences between the

candidates in their ability to handle different types of problems; second, candidates emphasise some problems and not others in a systematic way to their advantage; and third, that concerns with a “problem” or issue have an effect on a vote, separate from a voter’s partisanship and ideological orientation (Petrocik 1996, p. 831).

Testing for the House of Representative mavericks (Chapter 4) centred on comparing the maverick’s electoral performances with that of his party’s. The logic was that, if the maverick did relatively better than the party average, it is an indication that the maverick’s messages and issue agenda were aligned more closely with the voters’ than the party’s. The measure adopted was the change in primary vote percentage from one election to the next. The outcome for Quick, Georgiou and Latham was a pattern of superior performance over that of the party: Quick outperformed his party in four out of five elections, Georgiou in three from five, and Latham three from four. This test could not be applied in the same way to Bob Katter as three of his six elections have been contested as an independent. In his case, his primary vote was higher for all three of his elections as an independent, compared with his best result as a National Party candidate.

For the Senate mavericks (Chapter 5) it was noted that a Senator’s constituency is, in effect, not the state’s voting population *en masse*, rather the party executive who decide pre-selection and preference deals. This is because the list voting system used for Senate elections means the candidate’s campaign effort must be focussed on those that determine ticket positions: the higher up the ticket, the better prospect of election. In addition, prospective Senators need also to be adept at aligning their platform with the that of other party elites, particularly minor and micro parties, as it is the preference deals from these parties that often determine a candidate’s fate at the election.

Notwithstanding the constituency differences between Members and Senators, across the case studies distinct patterns were evident in the campaigning of all the mavericks. The first is that they all enjoyed high name recognition and that their policy platforms and messages were well known – they were all outspoken and controversial and invited media attention to their causes. Such findings would be anticipated; the case study subjects were selected because they were mentioned frequently in media as “mavericks” so to find they have higher name recognition than non-mavericks is hardly a surprise. But there is a deeper point that the thesis draws out: this notoriety allowed

the mavericks to form a “special relationship” with their constituents to convince them that it is their policy platform and their special efforts, not a party’s, that can fix the issues of concern. That is not to say that other MPs - non-mavericks - are not active or not popular or not able to form close relationships with voters; rather that, to achieve this, mavericks purposefully differentiate themselves and often their message, when it suits them, from the party’s.

A second evident pattern is that the mavericks were quite specific in their handling of issues and in framing debates: Harry Quick as the battler’s friend; Petro Georgiou as the conscience of affluent voters; Mark Latham (before he became leader) as the champion of aspirational suburbanites; and Bob Katter, Barnaby Joyce and Ross Lightfoot, all, largely, as fighters for regional and rural “values”. It is clear that mavericks are not omnibus politicians, attempting to cover the field of issues as party-focussed candidates often must. None try to be all things to all people: each of the subject mavericks was well known by their voters, mostly instantly known, for their core message, and it is apparent that for each that core message was a good fit with the problem concerns of their constituents – and their constituents knew it.

A third common trait is that the maverick’s campaign often fills a policy vacuum. The act of being a maverick frees them of having to continually promulgate an often staid and “packaged” party line, allowing them to hone in on the message that their voters are interested in. The subject mavericks were happy to eschew the party line if it suited their campaign. To the maverick, it is their constituents that matter, not the party. For example, Bob Katter’s and Barnaby Joyce’s policy agendas, and to an extent Ross Lightfoot’s, were closely matched to their rural voters. All found it difficult to campaign on, what they and their constituents often felt were, the “big city” issues and politics of the major parties. So their targeted campaigns filled the vacuum. Petro Georgiou and Mark Latham, in their own ways and with different audiences, tapped into frustration with the lack of connection some voters felt with the major parties: Georgiou allowed voters a “social conscience”, otherwise denied them by his Liberal Party, while Latham connected with aspirational suburbanites who felt the ALP was too captive to unions and not focussed enough on the suburban struggle. Harry Quick offered social welfare support to his largely benefit-dependant core constituency.



An important fact to note, nevertheless, is that the mavericks still managed to conduct their maverickism from within the party (even Katter for at least half of his career). This is an interesting point that gets to the nub of the research problem: mavericks exist within political parties - the questions are, how and why? Some explanations as to why mavericks persevere within the party came to light from the analysis of Research Question 1:

**As an outlet for internal dissent.** The party may tolerate a maverick because it allows party voters, who feel strongly about an issue that is not part of mainstream party policy, to stay with the party because the maverick shares those views. Petro Georgiou and Barnaby Joyce lend support to this description.

**To win difficult seats.** If the maverick has the ability to win a seat for the party that might otherwise be in danger or lost, then maverick transgressions might be accepted, even encouraged; for example, as with Harry Quick and Ross Lightfoot.

**To test party direction and allow for leadership development.** A party that has, to some extent, fallen out of favour with voters may accommodate a maverick with popularity or leadership potential. In these circumstances the party is fractious and more likely to be in opposition. Barnaby Joyce and Mark Latham are cases in point where the mavericks have taken the party along with them, and Bob Katter someone who did not.

**Because mavericks win support at local or state branch level.** All the major parties have a state pre-selection system for selecting candidates. The federal head office does intervene at times to over-rule state selections, as several instances in the case studies showed, but those instances are the exception rather than the rule. All of the mavericks studies here were adept at garnering local branch support for their candidatures, and even though this was often at odds with what the party at large might have preferred, that local support proved invaluable to shield the maverick from broader party censure.

### **Summary of findings for Research Question 1**

1. The proposition that voters know more of the maverick's message than the party's, is supported.

2. Petrocik's (1996) central hypothesis is confirmed: issue emphasis is specific to candidates. Voters, separate from partisanship orientation, will support a candidate based on the candidate's ability to competently "handle" issues important to them. Mavericks are not omnibus politicians, trying to be all things to all people; rather, they form a "special relationship" with their voters, even if at odds to the party line.
3. The maverick's issues agenda often fills a policy vacuum. Mavericks hone in on specific issues that, for a definable group of voters, the major parties are unable to satisfactorily cover.
4. There are a number of explanations as to how and why mavericks are tolerated within the party: (1) the maverick may keep voters within the party that might otherwise be lost; (2) the maverick may have the ability to win an otherwise difficult to win seat; (3) the maverick may have broad electoral popularity at a time when the party's electoral stocks are low; and (4) the maverick may be adept at drawing local branch support as protection against broader party sanction.

### **7.3 Research Question 2 findings**

*Is one explanation for maverick success that the maverick is a more accomplished communicator than the party loyalist - better at "conviction politics" and adopting the artefacts, icons and expertise of "celebrityhood"?*

This question is concerned with how politicians and voters come together - how they communicate with each other. "Conviction" and "celebrityhood" used this way are allegories for the wider communication task of the maverick. They allow the discussion to be centred on just two variables, and although it is recognised that political communication is much more, conviction and celebrity are well understood - or at least well used - concepts in the literature. It is reasonable, therefore it is contended, to present them here as shorthand for the maverick's communication task.

All the mavericks were found to embrace conviction and celebrity. Those patterns were not difficult to establish and should not come as a surprise. Conceptually, party loyalists would not be expected to have as strong a personal conviction platform or pursue

celebrity status as avidly – they would be happy with the party policy line and with the party leader taking the celebrity limelight

“Conviction politician” is largely a journalistic creation and here an attempt was made to give it a meaning that had relevance to this study of mavericks. “Conviction” like “maverick” is widely used in the media to describe politicians but there is limited scholarly discussion. Ditto and Mastronarde (2009, p. 295) find that synonymous traits like “authenticity”, “speaking their mind” and “voting their conscience” are all behaviours of the maverick politician. More specifically, Kane (2007, p. 9), in discussing aspects of democratic leadership, sees conviction politicians as those who do “what is right irrespective of polls”, which is true but does not go far enough for purposes here. On the other hand, Brent (2005b, 2009) does not agree with the term as a descriptor at all, disparaging when a politician so named by the media “back flips” for expedience’s sake.

Margaret Thatcher described herself as a ‘conviction politician’ and Ronald Reagan also attracted the label. In the Aussie context, Liberal Director Lynton Crosby introduced the concept when exercising the winner’s storytelling rights after the 2001 election. Crosby explained to journos that his research showed there were two conviction politicians in Australia, John Howard and Bob Brown, and this was the secret to their success. The scribblers dutifully digested the story, and the rest is history. None adopted it with greater gusto than Paul Kelly [a journalist], who at the height of his Mark Latham infatuation solemnly bestowed the label on the Lad as well. This indicated that we were in for a momentous contest between two colossi. Then Boofhead clocked in the worst opposition result since 1977 – whoops. (Brent 2009)

Brent might correctly see conviction as a misnomer, a branding tool rather than a matter of fact, but that does not stop the label being relevant to voters and therefore an influence on their vote. The conclusion drawn here is that it is the appearance of a politician being true to convictions rather than reality that he or she is, that is important. As Brent (2009) points out, John Howard was widely acclaimed by journalists as a conviction politician (Kelly 2003; Shanahan 2002), yet he back-tracked throughout his political life, for example, famously, by introducing a goods and services tax (Eccleston 1998, p.16); but he never lost his conviction mantle. Perhaps the explanation is found in the Chapter 2 discussion which identified a trust-or-conviction paradox, concluding that

“trust” has different properties and functions in different contexts: voters accept, on one hand, that politicians will lie, while on the other, want them to deliver on their promises. “The public crave politicians who stand for something” (Gruen 2005). This, it is contended, is the so-called conviction politician.

A central claim by some contemporary writers (Uhr 2007, Goot 2002, Jaensch 1995) that there is a “crisis of trust” in Australian politics is, as the discussion in Chapter 2 found, largely not supported by the evidence and is something of a narrative fallacy. Contemporary Australian voters do not believe their politicians are any worse than they used to be; in fact the evidence is that trust in politicians is increasing. The inference here is that voters do not necessarily care if their politicians lie – providing they carry strong convictions.

This means that politicians are freed, to an extent, from the daily tell-the-truth expectations that bind everyday people, as long as they deliver (or are seen to deliver) on their promises to fix the important issues. It is not a matter of being honest – it is a matter of being believed. Ditto and Mastronade (2009, p. 295) are close to the mark in saying that rhetoric is as important as reputation. “Conviction politician”, therefore, is a label that mavericks will seek in order to augment their political marketability.

If conviction credentials are what mavericks want to sell, then the question is how to sell them. All the mavericks for this study sought the conviction mantle and used “star power” (’t Hart and Tindall 2009, p.4) as a marketing vehicle. Keane (2002, p. 13) argues that the success of maverick political figures is partly explained by their ability to represent and reflect the interest of many who do not identify with traditional political communication. It is this audience, the one that is turned off by mainstream politics and mainstream political marketing, that is most susceptible to the messages from the candidate who can best project the heady mix of celebrity, conviction and maverickism.

Undoubtedly, as Street (2004, p. 435) observes, the dominance of a media culture within society is the driving force behind a blurring of politics and celebrity. He sees that celebrity techniques are an unavoidable and legitimate consequence of an “anti-political” mood held by many voters in Australia. It appears that the subject mavericks understood this: they all adapted and applied their conviction and celebrity credentials

to suit their specific audience. There are clear patterns of behaviour in the case studies that support this proposition – all struggled with any other view other than their own, all adopted an anti-politician mantle, and all sought the media spotlight – yet each was unique in their relationship with their voters. For example, Mark Latham’s “insiders” (that is, the political, business and union elites) and “outsiders” (the “ordinary”, pragmatic, disenfranchised voter) narrative that he developed to guide his political decision making is a clear manifestation of an anti-political agenda, designed to make his political opponents look irrelevant and out of touch.

This means that the mavericks can show consistent traits but still be very different from each other. Conviction and celebrityhood may be impossible to measure empirically; but it is possible, in terms of forming conclusions and generalising the outcomes of the three case studies, to match patterns that demonstrate how and to what extent mavericks harness the power of conviction and celebrity.

Two broad groupings of mavericks become apparent: “locals” and “reformers”. The patterns of conviction and celebrity behaviour for the political lives of Lightfoot, Katter and Quick suggest a geographically specific, local approach; while Latham and Joyce perform on the national stage, attempting to move their party from one ideological position to another. Georgiou is also considered a reformer for his causes such as refugee reform, but with a focus on influencing national policy.

### **Summary of findings for Research Question 2**

1. The proposition that mavericks strive to be seen as conviction politicians and that they embrace celebrityhood is supported. Mavericks adopt a populist, “anti-politics” persona to create and maintain their conviction and celebrity images, appealing to those voters that do not identify with traditional politics. The way the mavericks use their conviction and celebrity credentials suggests two broad groupings: “locals” and “reformers”.
2. “Conviction politician” is largely a journalist’s construct, but for the purposes of electoral politics it is a perception held by and important to voters, so “conviction” as a maverick attribute is as much a matter of perception as a matter of fact.

3. Mavericks do not try and cover all voter concerns, but use conviction and celebrity devices to appeal to their core voters. So maverickism is not general; it is philosophically or geographically territorial.
4. Mavericks are more adept than non-mavericks at manipulating the media for political purposes. Mavericks cultivate a media image based on “star power” (t Hart and Tindall 2009), tend to attract the media spotlight, and are often sought by journalists because of their propensity to “speak their minds” and provide a headline at odds with the party line.

## **7.4 Research Question 3 findings**

*Are mavericks more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with policy influence and career within the party, or do mavericks have a significant impact on party decision-making and policy formulation?*

This question explored institutional control of the maverick by the party. With regard to party dominance, it was noted in Chapter 2 that Australia’s government is in effect a two party system and is one of the most disciplined in the world. Several factors were seen to be at play.

Compulsory voting means that a party’s marketing efforts in Australia tend to be “a fight for the centre” as campaigns target the large mass of public who take little interest in politics, but have to vote nonetheless. In the USA on the other hand, for example, campaigns focus on mobilising a party’s partisan base at the expense of the middle ground. Australian parties have tended to demand unity and discipline from their MPs and elections have been about holding voters who do not have strong partisan allegiance and can therefore be more easily swayed. These voters value strong leadership and unity.

Another factor influencing party discipline is Australia’s full-preference, instant-runoff voting in the lower house, in contrast to first-past-the-post, proportional or list voting methods variously used elsewhere. The Australian system favours major parties over minor parties and independents, the result being a strengthening in party discipline as political careers can only really be pursued within a major party. This dominance of the major parties militates against the maverick voice, while the “subvention” (Ghazarian

2006) of state resources by the parties concentrates marketing and campaign efforts on the party message.

The system may be predisposed towards party discipline yet, as Ditto and Mastronade (2009, p. 296) found, mavericks are liked by voters more than party sycophants. So the candidate is often left in a quandary: to adhere to party discipline or to do what is popular. Kam (2002) sees that MPs must choose between (1) career advancement and the policy influence that loyalty brings, or (2) favour with the voters. He argues that, in the face of electorally unpopular party policy, leaders take advantage of their member's parliamentary career ambitions to maintain unity. This forces the individual candidate to choose between career or electoral popularity, with the conclusion here that the maverick holding a personal conviction agenda will choose the latter.

But the research showed that the two concepts – policy influence and popularity – are not mutually exclusive. Notwithstanding a predilection for popularity, some (but not all) of the mavericks also exercise significant policy influence – indeed, popularity can lead to policy influence. It is difficult to measure that influence, and perhaps they could have had more policy input if they had toed the party line and sought promotion and power; however, it is concluded that on balance their policy influence is greater than that of a sycophantic, party faithful backbencher.

It is clear from the case studies that the degree of policy influence the mavericks sought varied. Quick, Katter and Lightfoot appear the best fit for Kam's career advancement-dissent model. Each found influence within the party an insufficient lure to offset the electoral costs of unpopular party platforms. By dint of his cross-bench position in parliament Katter does have an impact on party policy greater than the more "local" mavericks in Quick and Lightfoot, but his is nonetheless a populist agenda aimed squarely at his constituents. As one Queensland newspaper reported (Woolford 2011), "... he couldn't care less about anything outside north Queensland."

For the purposes of analysis here, the "local" mavericks - Lightfoot, Katter and Quick - seek primarily to represent "ordinary" people's needs and wishes. By contrast, Latham and Joyce, in their own ways, sought both electoral popularity and party influence and have been (somewhat unevenly) successful in obtaining both. As the Latham case study showed, he became "less" maverick when he became leader recognising himself that he

had to soften his media image, particularly with women, and tone down his propensity for public displays of crudity (Latham 2004b). Likewise, Joyce, when he moved from backbencher to a shadow ministry position found that a career and real policy responsibility meant that he could no longer “crap on anyone else” (Lester 2010).

Georgiou’s career was more enigmatic. He did not appear to overly covet electoral popularity; it seemed to come to him because of his national policy agenda. But he did hold strong policy beliefs and became known as a champion for his causes, a conviction politician. The case study showed he did exert policy influence from the backbench because of his maverick ways.

Where the behaviour of Latham, Joyce and Georgiou come together is in their desire to not only influence party policy but to reform or reshape national thinking. The case studies show that all three in their own ways made serious attempts to influence the organisational direction and thinking of parties. They did this in different ways: Latham by working the Labor factions to his own benefit then storming into the party leadership; Joyce by challenging the central beliefs of his National Party and presenting himself as the true embodiment of “traditional” rural values; and Georgiou by representing the “conscience” of the Liberal Party on social and human rights issues. Whereas Lightfoot, Katter and Quick were centrally concerned about their constituents; Latham, Joyce and Georgiou largely sought to influence the national agenda, and for purposes here can be labelled (as they also were in response to Research Question 2) “reformers”.

### **Summary of findings for Research Question 3**

1. The proposition that mavericks are more concerned with electoral popularity than they are with policy influence is not fully supported. “Local” mavericks, those focussed on their constituency rather than the national stage, are a close fit to Kam’s (2002) career advancement-dissent model. “Reformers” who seek influence on the national stage, however, appear adept at gathering both policy influence and strong voter support.
2. Kam’s (2002) claim, that the leader enforces unity with control over the perks of office, is supported.



3. However, Kam's central theory, as he points out (2002, p. 199), is not an absolute rule; he readily accepts that party unity is shaped by a variety of factors, for example, electoral pressure and social norms.

## 7.5 Conclusions

The previous discussion drew on the case studies and the research questions to derive some cross-case inferences. The purpose here is to bring those findings together for some over-all conclusions that help answer the research problem: *What consequences and impacts do maverick politicians have on contemporary Australian politics, particularly Australian political parties?*

**Outlet for an anti-political mood.** As discussed at several points in this thesis, Australian politics has undergone a major realignment over the past two decades. Its roots lie in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the union movement began to lose its political influence thereby undermining the basis of the political system Australia has had for much of the last century. During the twentieth century the existence of Australia's two political parties relied on a divide: on one side the strong social base of the ALP and its organised labour ties; and on the other, a conservative Liberal/National party to counter it. This approach makes an important assumption about Australian society. It assumes that for political purposes the country divides in two: in the community there is a real social separation that each party broadly mirrors and appeals to.

This was a valid assumption for many years; however now, in the new century, this "binary divide" no longer holds resulting in the most serious weakness of both sides of politics in Australia - a crumbling social base. One clear impact mavericks have had on the Australian polity is that they represent a manifestation of growing voter disconnect with the mainstream political parties, a disconnect described in this thesis as "anti-politics".

There has not necessarily been a lessening by voters of faith in the Australian political system (a point made in Chapter 2); rather, the domestic agendas of the major parties have evaporated over the last twenty years resulting in many voters looking elsewhere (Marsh 2010). This is because union membership has collapsed, and in any event the Labor Party has ceased to represent "working class" values and increasingly moved to

the technocratic, pragmatic, bureaucratic centre. And without an organised workers' party with which to do battle, the conservative side of Australian politics has similarly become centric and struggled for a *raison d'être*. This means that now a diminishing number of voters remain rusted on loyalists of the major parties.

... once upon a time the major parties evolved to represent the interests of certain sections of society, but exist today thanks to institutional inertia. They're here because they're here. Somebody has to do it. (Brent 2010b)

Pointing to two dominant parties also involves making assumptions about their ideologies. It suggests that the two parties present the community with real and divergent choices and that these are based on broader differences of political philosophy or ideology. These choices have been valid for most of the past hundred years but do not apply now (Marsh 2010). Thus, the suppositions which underpin the two party system do not reflect contemporary political reality.

This is an uncomfortable fact for many political elites and insiders, so it is often ignored in the narrative by the media and party leaders. For example, while the media often comment about the unpopularity of politicians, it rarely acknowledges the impact that that unpopularity has on Australian political parties. This especially applies to one forceful impact of anti-political sentiment in recent years – One Nation. Emerging after the 1998 election, when the exhaustion of both major parties first became really evident, One Nation was seen as being about race, immigration and economic protection – no matter how contradictory its leader, Pauline Hanson was on these issues. The much broader reason for One Nation's appeal, the growing detachment and irrelevance of the major political parties and the political process, as a whole, was largely ignored.

While in the political spotlight Hanson brought forward a number of issues that appealed to a poorer rural and outer-suburban support base, including government funding for Aboriginals, immigration, social security support for single parents, gun ownership, the effects of globalisation on industry, economic restructuring, and a flat tax system. Through Hanson's confused and contradictory delivery (which eventually contributed to her undoing) her underlying theme was that mainstream politicians,

mired in the ideologies of the past and cowered by the political correctness of the present, were unwilling to raise these issues (Pritchard and McManus 2000).

As Hanson's light faded in the late 1990s, mavericks, minor parties and independents provided alternative outlets for the anti-political mood in the electorate. The conclusion from the case studies is that the subject mavericks prospered by detaching themselves from the prevailing political class. On the right, Lightfoot, Joyce and Katter emphasised (possibly exaggerated) perceptions of differences in wealth, employment opportunities and service delivery between the city and the bush. On the left, Latham and Quick, one on the national stage and one very much localised, played to the suburban have-nots. In Latham's terms, aspirational "outsiders" disconnected and excluded from the politically elite "insiders". Georgiou also bucked the "major party game" by doggedly championing causes that both parties were afraid to touch. The pattern consistent across all the case studies is that the mavericks appealed to voters somewhere on the fringes while the parties stuck stubbornly to the centre, a centre that is shrinking.

This study supports research by writers such as 't Hart and Tindall (2009) who argue that, as public disillusionment with "politics as usual" becomes more entrenched, then the bigger the political space for "celebrity politics" to take hold. This is the space occupied, to an extent, by the mavericks who incorporate an "anti-politics" persona into their appeal. Thus it is the mavericks' ability to criticise and detach themselves from the old political framework that makes them effective against the parties that are still very much caught up in it.

But the impact mavericks have is much more than exposing the sparseness of the major parties' social identities. The case studies also indicate that mavericks have effectively harnessed their media and celebrity status to promote their convictions, in contrast to parties which appear to voters to be anchored in the banal. In this way mavericks present themselves as issue-based and populist – a direct counterpoint and contrast to the major parties' lack of an agenda, thereby further highlighting the void in the party platforms. The maverick, it is contended from the case studies, is more effective than the party at managing the impressions of the "rationally ignorant" voter by better "owning" the issues that are foremost in the voters' collective minds (Petrocik 1996).

**Testing ground for leaders.** At the time of writing this thesis, two of the six case study subjects remain in politics as elected members, Bob Katter and Barnaby Joyce. In the context of anti-politics and the hollowing-out of the major party agendas, an examination of their current political manoeuvrings is instructive. The supposition here is that mavericks prosper from an anti-political mood in the electorate, but it is a different question whether their resulting populist persona translates into effective leadership. Latham the maverick did not translate to Latham the leader – the electorate just would not accept a maverick as prime minister.

Katter has announced that he will be forming a new political party to contest the next Queensland and federal elections, calling the party (somewhat unimaginatively) “Katter’s Australian Party”. While there have been comparisons to One Nation (Barrett 2011), Katter’s position does vary from that of Pauline Hanson when she founded One Nation in 1997. Importantly, Katter has demonstrated a different attitude towards the indigenous population by promoting land rights (Karvelas 2010) and he has stayed largely out of the immigration debate (Parnell 2011). More significantly, Katter is not a political novice: he has served almost continuously in federal or state parliament for 37 years, including as a state minister, while Hanson’s political experience amounted to one term of less than three years. This gives him claims to “gravitas” and “credibility”, attributes the lack of which were a detriment to Hanson.

Notwithstanding, his party’s agenda has many parallels with One Nation clearly aimed at a combination of economic protectionism, anti-neoliberalism and anti-environmentalism. Policies include stopping the sale of Queensland’s electricity assets, blocking the carbon tax, reducing the power of Coles and Woolworths and allowing people the freedom to fish wherever wish (Parnell 2011). The combination of right-wing stances on many issues with opposition to government privatisations and big business is definitely a niche that is lacking in Australian politics, at odds to the centrist, technocratic policy positioning of both major parties.

But will Katter’s party succeed? Minor parties representing the disaffected, conservative side of politics compete in a very crowded space. One Nation dominated right-wing minor party politics in the late 1990s and early 2000s but quickly fell away. However, there are now social conservative parties like Family First (upper house South Australia), the Democratic Labor Party (upper house Victoria), and the Christian

Democratic Party and the Shooters and Fishers Party (both upper house New South Wales). Each has dominated this niche in their own state, and the DLP now also has a federal senator after narrowly defeating Family First's Steve Fielding. Other small parties in this space include the Fishing Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Outdoor Recreation Party. They generally support gun rights, oppose marine parks, and oppose protection of the natural environment if it impinges on the ability of people to use it for "recreation". Fred Nile's Christian Democratic Party has also taken on much of this agenda in New South Wales.

There is potential for Katter to lead a new minor party that could become dominant amongst right-wing minnow parties. His primary targets for parliamentary members would come from sitting Nationals who might be tempted to defect (Parnell 2011). He has, he claims, backers in the National Liberal Party for "a new political direction" (Scott 2011). Katter's maverick profile will help, but he will need to work hard, building local branches, campaigning on the ground and finding new candidates – not just ex-Nationals – to run. Nevertheless, the prospect that he could use his maverick status to exploit an anti-political sentiment among conservative voters has to be considered as real. If he can commit to a number of election cycles he has, on the evidence, a set of political principles that could well set the foundations for a right-wing minor party to advance in the way the Greens have developed on the left.

On the other hand, Katter's foray might rise for a while, then fade away. If this happened he would not only mirror Hanson but also New Zealand First, founded in 1993 by Winston Peters, a former minister in New Zealand's National Party government. Like Katter's, that party was based on opposition to globalisation, immigration and free trade and largely opposed to the fierce wave of economic rationalism that spread across New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called "Rogernomics" (Ahlquist 2011). While NZF now lacks any representation in the New Zealand Parliament, for a time it was the clear third party and Peters was a very influential figure in New Zealand politics.

Now that Katter is a party leader in his own right it is difficult to speculate how the electorate might receive a man who, after building much of his more recent maverick credentials on eschewing the party system, now finds himself part of it, albeit on its fringes.

Katter is now 66 years old and may not have the time to wait until he is in his 70s to see if his efforts will move the hodge-podge of small right-wing minor parties closer to forming a more significant national force that coalesces the prevailing conservative anti-political sentiment. But if he can, it would change the balance in the party system and be a clear demonstration of the influence of a maverick on contemporary Australian politics, particularly Australian political parties.

Whereas Katter's aim is to create a creditable third force on the right of politics by tapping onto an anti-political mood among disaffected National and Liberal National Party members and supporters, Barnaby Joyce, by contrast, is parlaying his maverickism to change the National Party from within. As discussed in the case studies, Joyce, who holds some similar views to Katter, has decided to stay in the party although he has been at times tempted to leave.

Joyce has toyed with the idea of leaving the Nationals for almost all the time he has been in parliament. As the case study revealed, in 2008 while the Queensland Nationals were pondering their preselection for the Senate, Joyce threatened to stand as an independent if he was placed lower than number two on the ticket. Earlier that year, Tony Abbott, not yet Liberal Party leader, said Joyce should "pull his head in, be a team player and abide by coalition policy" (Tulloch 2008). But the Liberal leader, Malcolm Turnbull, balked. First he sought to silence Joyce by offering him a place in the shadow ministry. Joyce coyly declined. Others suggested that Joyce should take over the leadership of the Nationals. Again Joyce, "revelling in the attention" (Tulloch 2008) declined to take the bait.

If he has accepted the Nationals' leadership he would have been under immense pressure to leave the Senate and contest the House of Representatives at the 2010 election, and as a lower house member he would have been much less able to breach coalition policy (O'Malley 2009). Joyce was far more effective, in an electoral sense, continuing his maverick activity in Senate.

So Joyce remained on the senate ticket for the Liberal National Party at the August 2010 election. A few months prior Abbott had succeeded Turnbull as Liberal and opposition leader and one of his first moves was to offer Joyce a spot, again, on the opposition front bench this time as shadow minister for finance. Joyce agreed, although

he found the move from maverick backbencher to shadow cabinet difficult. Abbott quickly moved him to regional development and water, portfolios that were a better fit to his regional/remote supporter base, which he retained after the election and still keeps.

Joyce's maverickism sets him apart from the party. For almost five years, from when he took his seat in 2005, he behaved as if he was "outside the tent" doing few favours for successive Coalition leaders Brendan Nelson and Malcolm Turnbull. He said he was answerable to the Nationals rather than the federal Coalition, a line which played to his rural Queensland voters.

Accordingly Joyce, like Katter, appeals to the assumptions many traditional National Party voters would prefer to make about their party. As the National Party's policy positions have become vacant and largely irrelevant, supporters have turned to mavericks to represent their views. They compare and prefer Joyce and Katter to the rehearsed, market-tested habits of the party.

The problem Joyce has is that as a senior front-bench Coalition member, he has found it difficult, like Latham, to continue on his maverick way. He is as close to a household name as can be achieved in politics; but as a maverick he causes resentment among party members because mavericks are, ultimately, politically selfish. Mavericks earn recognition by differentiating themselves from their party; they build their own capital at the expense of the group. This involves some hypocrisy because they piggyback into parliament under the party banner and then proceed to criticise their colleagues. However, since Tony Abbott took over the Coalition leadership, Joyce has moved progressively "inside the tent", becoming more of a team player. Whether he continues to conform and morphs into just another politician remains to be seen.

Joyce may finally make the move to the House of Representatives at the 2013 election (Harvey 2011). After that, presumably, he would quickly become Nationals leader and, if the Coalition win the election, deputy Prime Minister.

Publically, Joyce and Katter have built their careers portraying themselves as representatives of a constituency rather than a party – they are pragmatic in nature and popularist in style. Mark Latham also tried, and succeeded for a long time, to be a

popularist leader but ultimately failed. However, Latham attempted to lead one of the major political parties whereas Joyce's and Katter's target audience is much narrower.

However, if Joyce did become Nationals leader (let alone deputy PM) the Joyce-the-maverick-leader scenario becomes, on appearances, more Lathamesque than Katteresque. The question for Joyce and Katter is the same one this thesis posed for Mark Latham: can a maverick be a successful leader of a political party? If mavericks are an outlet for the voters' collective anti-political mood, if their success hinges, at least partly, on a rejection of business-as-usual politics, then being a leader and a maverick must be a difficult and contrary achievement.

Joyce has his political appeal, but it may not be broad enough to capture the largely disinterested voter across the country. Authors such as Whitford (2010) agree with the position taken here that the political persona presented in bush politics is one of an outsider, someone untainted by mainstream politics. Similarly Bennett (2002), in identifying the popularist theme as "the belief that the will of the ordinary people should prevail as opposed to the politicians" captures the anti-political maverick perfectly.

According to Bennett (2002, p.1) the populist leader tends to adopt the rhetoric that it is the "people's voice" that needs to be heard or claim that they are speaking for the people. Joyce has been able to capitalise on those sentiments in rural and regional Australia, and his leadership style to date has been to publicly question coalition policy. He has, according to Whitford (2010, p.130) "turned the party maverick persona into an art form."

Thus, Barnaby Joyce throughout his career in the Senate has touted his reputation as a maverick who has stood up to his party. As outlined in Chapter 2, standing up for your convictions is a desirable trait in a politician, however that trait is not all that the "maverick" label applies to. Joyce's leadership style has been described as the kind of shoot-from-the-hip, gut-based decision making (usually accompanied by a refusal to back down from said positions) that characterised the Mark Latham's leadership style. The kind of instinctive impulsiveness that scares mainstream voters who, on the evidence, prefer their political leaders safe and bland (Brent 2010a).



The conclusion from this discussion is that mavericks can and do provide a testing ground for leaders to emerge within the party. Of the case study subjects, Mark Latham, Barnaby Joyce and Bob Katter have all in different ways flexed their leadership muscles. The indication is that the more mainstream the party, the more difficult it is for a maverick to become an effective leader. Mark Latham, when he became ALP leader attempted to modify his ways, and admitted that he had to, but in the end was unable to establish himself as a long-term leader. Barnaby Joyce faces a similar problem because he is close to the top of the conservative coalition and potentially, realistically, deputy prime minister. Given Joyce's track record, and mindful of the experiences of Mark Latham, it is difficult to see him succeeding, unless, of course, he modifies his behaviour to the extent that he is no longer a maverick.

Perhaps Bob Katter has the best chance of holding the joint titles of maverick and leader. But he is leader of a micro party that exists because of his name and influence only. In other words, his is a maverick party. Even if Katter's Australian Party coalesces the other existing minnow right-wing parties into a credible, conservative third force, it will still be largely seen as a vehicle for Katter, similar to One Nation and Pauline Hanson and New Zealand First and Winston Peters – take away the leader and the party falls away. In these instances it is still about the person rather than the party, so the conversation is not really about party leadership but still about the individual maverick.

**Policy influence.** While mavericks may not be a very effective source of leadership material for the party, the indication from the case studies is that many do have a role in setting party policy directions. Kam (2002) found that most politicians, by the leader's promise of career advancement or policy influence, are "institutionally limited" to toe the party line. This means that it is party loyalists that tend to have the policy input while mavericks have to forsake influence because their views are often at odds with the party's. However, the case studies did show that in several ways mavericks can have an impact on party policy development, to a greater extent than Kam's theory might ascribe.

Earlier in this chapter the maverick's ability to fill a policy vacuum was discussed. Mavericks, the case studies reveal, are not omnibus politicians who try to be all things to all people. Mavericks do not need a full suite of policies, as parties must, because

part of being a maverick is to have a core message aimed at a defined constituency. To illustrate, Katter, Lightfoot and Joyce matched their messages to their rural voters. Georgiou took aim at social justice issues, while Latham and Quick in their own quite different ways attached themselves to the suburbs.

Mavericks have notoriety and high name recognition in the electorate. They purposefully differentiate themselves from the party line, often to fill a policy gap left by the parties or to adopt issues that the parties are slow to grasp. In this way mavericks can “test” policies in the “market place” – that is, with the voters – for the parties to then adopt if they prove popular. Mavericks can be a source of innovation.

One example from the case studies is Mark Latham in his pre-leadership days. From the backbench Latham advocated many new policy directions for the ALP in fields as diverse as education, civic participation, economic management and foreign affairs. Latham’s maverick reputation and single mindedness ensured his thought agenda always before the party and the media. Many of his ideas were adopted by the ALP, not just by Latham when he became leader, but endured under the Rudd and Gillard leaderships.

Rudd and Gillard, like Latham, believed that governments should strike a better balance between public and private interests, embrace Keynesian economics (to an extent), correct for market failure and invest more in education, health and retirement incomes, while supporting open markets and withstanding attacks from the extreme Left and the nationalist Right (Kelly 2009).

And like Latham, Rudd and Gillard saw that Labor's task is to hold the middle ground between state socialism and free-market fundamentalism. Rudd argued the failure of neo-liberalism made the state the primary actor; it must save the financial system, stimulate the economy and impose a new global regulatory regime (Kelly 2009). Latham may have believed in politics on a smaller scale, but he too accepted that even his new local communities would be “bound together by the regulatory power and funding of central government” (Latham 2005a, p. 95). His policy impact on the Labor Party was significant and its influence remains.

Mavericks also affect party policy when they adopt the role of “alternative view outlet” thereby “allowing” voters, that might otherwise look elsewhere, to vote for the party.

Petro Georgiou is, in some ways, an illustration of this. His strongly held convictions on social justice issues, such as immigration and ethnic affairs, allowed voters to support the Liberal party when they otherwise may have voted elsewhere. These voters are the so-called “doctor’s wives” who are the “conscience of the Liberal Party” (Gordon 2008b; Heinrichs 2003). Ross Lightfoot served a similar purpose for the Liberals on the other side of the left-right divide. His hard right views on gun control and asylum seekers allowed Liberal voters to stay with the party when they might otherwise have strayed to a party like One Nation.

Thus mavericks can be tolerated because they allow the party to cast a broader policy net. Sometimes this may be a form of “dog whistle politics” - that is, telling one group of voters one thing, while allowing or encouraging another group to believe another (Goodin and Saward 2005). For example, when prime minister, John Howard was obliged to publically take the “politically correct” party position on gun control, while at the same time permitting Lightfoot supporters a channel for their firearm ownership beliefs.

Similarly, Coalition leader Tony Abbott censured Barnaby Joyce for alarmist claims about the USA defaulting on its debt, but Joyce’s outbursts were well received by traditional right-wing party supporters, and Abbott may not have been as upset as he publically appeared: as far as the Coalition was concerned, Joyce’s comments served to keep traditional National Party voters “in the tent”. Allowing mavericks to play to the “dog whistle” has the hallmarks of a deliberate strategy by the parties, although it is difficult to be certain.

**Organisational influence.** In Australia, party discipline and institutional control are integral to the political system. Parliament, as Kam (2002, p. 4) observes, is characterised by a “double monopoly” of power in Cabinet’s near monopoly of the executive and legislation program, and the party’s monopoly over parliament itself. He contends that these monopolies rely on strict party discipline and that, therefore, the maintenance of party unity is “the central strategic problem of modern parliamentary government” (2002, p. iv).

The power and authority of centralised factions and head office control on both sides of Australian politics cannot be understated. These factions and alliances are the key to

enforcing discipline in Australian politics because, as the major parties have become more detached from their social base, their internal dynamics have become more into focus. McAllister (1991, p. 223) made the observation 20 years ago that “as party systems experience more widespread and deep-seated structural change, analyses that look below the party as a unit will become as significant as those that look at interparty factors.” He could not have been more prophetic: as modern political parties face the loss of their traditional community ties, it is the interplay between party factions and power bases that will decide their ultimate success or failure.

A factional system is officially accepted in the ALP with various left and right factions recognised within the union and party structures. There are divisions, although less formalised, among the Coalition as well: most obviously Liberal versus Nationals; but also urban Liberals who tend to be economically dry and socially liberal (the “doctors’ wives”) versus those outside the cities whose instincts are more interventionist on both fronts.

However, it is localism much more than factionalism that was the consistent trait of the subject mavericks. The case studies revealed that all the mavericks developed and nurtured strong ties with the party rank and file. That is not to say that they all were entirely locally focussed, but even if they played on the national stage like Mark Latham and Barnaby Joyce, they all cultivated and kept their home electorate ties; and they all understood the importance of localising their messages. This was necessary because their maverick views often had them at odds with “head office” so they needed a support base within the organisational wing in order to survive.

Australian political parties, centred on the leader and obsessed with a consistent message, dislike localism because, as found by Crisp et al (2004), localism threatens the pursuit of national programs and policies, and the omnipresence of the factions. Politicians who have strong local ties and individual support bases are more likely to break from party unity, and, importantly, be more electorally successful (Travits 2009, 2010).

Their localism showed itself in several ways. One clear example for all the mavericks was the support they managed to accumulate at pre-selection time. Georgiou and Quick, for instance, constantly had to rely on solid local party membership backing to

guarantee their candidacy at each election. Both faced relentless challenges from the party leaders and factional bosses, but managed to defeat these assaults because of their ability to generate local, grass-roots support. Similarly, Lightfoot and Joyce had to deflect factional interest in their Senate seats by calling on local party support, while Katter at the time he quit the Nationals Party almost caused a party split such was the following and sympathy he had among the membership.

Mark Latham's strong links to his local ALP organisational wing are well documented in the case study. Although he became to despise the factions and rank and file branch members – "Labor is stuffed. Its branches are rorted and its membership base is a joke" (Latham 2005a, p. 104) – for "pragmatic reasons" he joined the Right faction and was active in branch politics from when he was still at school. Local Green Valley party members financially supported him through university, and he continued to rely on branch party support through his time as mayor of Liverpool Council and later to be preselected for the seat of Werriwa.

Mavericks, therefore, cause headaches for the party not just at a political level but also organisationally. They challenge unity by developing power bases at odds to the party message and embedded factions. But it was apparent from the case studies that the parties often tolerate the mavericks because they can win difficult seats. In the case of Lightfoot and Joyce, they won their initial Senate seats precisely because they were outspoken, controversial and differentiated from the party line. When Quick won his seat for Labor it had been in Liberal hands for two decades, so he needed to mount an individualistic, local campaign to be successful. Unsurprisingly, once mavericks had secured the seats, their parties became less tolerant of their maverick ways.

## **7.6 Implications for theory and future research**

This thesis employs a case study methodology with limited claims for generalisability; given the relative lack of enquiry into political maverickism in either the scholarly or popular literature the purpose is to give a "first cut" of the consequences and impacts mavericks have on contemporary Australian politics. However, the findings of the case studies are useful as a pointer for further study and nonetheless generalisable to theory development.

The first possibility for further investigation is to go beyond the limitations of this study to see if the outcomes are relevant to other settings. First, the findings here apply only to Australian federal political parties and mavericks. Further work needs to be done to establish the extent and impact of maverickism in Australia by broadening the study to minor party mavericks and independents, and to mavericks in state parliaments. Doing so would provide a much more comprehensive and multi-faceted picture of mavericks and their impacts and help confirm, augment and challenge the outcomes of this study.

The next useful step would be a cross-national study involving other jurisdictions and political systems, particularly in countries where voting is not compulsory, and/or which use different electoral methods such as proportional, list or first-past-the-post systems. Considerably more work needs to be done to compare and contrast maverick behaviour and its consequences between countries. Such research would make a significant contribution to the study of vote choice, electoral and campaign politics, and political parties.

A further extension of the limitations would be to compare and contrast the findings here with mavericks from non-contemporary Australian politics. Using historical data it may be possible to “map” maverick behaviour over time and see how the roles and behaviour of mavericks change.

With regard to theory development, a number of theories relied upon and referenced here invite further research. For instance, concerning Petrocik’s (1996) seminal study on issue ownership, it would be interesting to extend his research to the Australian context. It is surprising that has not been done to date. Petrocik centred his work on American presidential contests, so it would be useful to have a similar study conducted in Australia to compare outcomes under Australia’s Westminster parliamentary system and compulsory voting regime.

Similarly, the field of psychobiography was touched on in several of the case studies, for example in deconstructing the Latham persona in terms of the effect of the death of his father, and in describing Katter’s maverick behaviour in terms of his earlier experiences with his politician father. A further and more extended analysis of maverick political lives through the use of psychological theory and research may help

understand maverick behaviour more, and uncover the private motives behind the adoption of political decisions.

In addition, celebrity and conviction politics are little researched. Further investigation is warranted into the extent to which “conviction” is a valid indicator of political success, how it is measured and how the label is earned. This study recognised it is largely a journalist’s construction but argued that it should be the subject of scholarly investigation. Similar readily used concepts such as “celebrity” and “star power” have had some investigation from authors such as ‘t Hart and Tindall (2009), but there is still much to know. For example, little work has been done on the similarities and differences between the various national manifestations of political celebrity, as well as the degree to which international celebrity status affects the Australian political processes. It would also be very useful to know more about the intersection between entertainment and politics, how that affects campaigning and voter perceptions of politicians, and whether, ultimately, politics is devalued by it merging with entertainment.

Another significant area that needs empirical research is to establish to what extent notions of trust in politics and politicians are changing. This thesis made the claim that it is something of a narrative fallacy that many writers, including Uhr (2007) and Goot (2002), assert that there is a “crisis of trust” in Australian politics and that citizens trust their politicians less and less. The problem is that survey evidence (McAllister and Clark 2008) shows that measures of “trust in government” and “satisfaction with democracy” have increased over the past 30 years. Similarly, polling shows that since 1996 voters have doubled their ratings of politicians in terms of “honesty” and “ethics” (roymorgan.com.au). The survey data, therefore, is not consistent with the views of contemporary Australian authors such as Uhr, so more study is needed to better understand voters’ perceptions of trust.

Finally, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to determine how applicable Kam’s (2002) career advancement-dissent model is to modern Australian politics. Kam’s model states that unpopular party policies, and therefore electoral insecurity for the individual politician, triggers dissent, and that that dissent is tempered by either the promise of career advancement or policy influence. While this thesis found generally that the theory holds, the declining relevance of the major parties in

Australia appears to be fuelling dissent by candidates and MPs. Future research should therefore concentrate on the effect of weakening party identification on a candidate's attitude to policy influence, career advancement and the leader's ability to maintain party discipline.



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## **Appendix**

*The median Australian voter and the values that influence their vote choice*

Paper presented by the author at the 3rd European Consortium for Political Research Conference in Budapest, September 10, 2005.

## **The median Australian voter and the values that influence their vote choice<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Context: This paper fits within a larger research project with the ultimate aim of identifying Australian maverick politicians, what motivates them, and why - or why not - they are successful. To do this it is seen as necessary to set two contextual reference points against which mavericks can be assessed and analysed: first, a profile of the median Australian voter and the values that influence their vote choice; and second, an analysis of the Australian political system within which the maverick must operate. The first of these two tasks is the subject of this paper.

The research project to which this paper contributes is a work-in-progress, with data collection and data analysis continually being undertaken and revised by the author with the assistance and guidance of Associate Professor Richard Herr of the School of Government, University of Tasmania. The data and findings presented here may be subject to review, rework or a change in emphasis in the final outcome, particularly as contemporary data becomes available.

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore a research interest into how voter choice behaviour might be changing in Australia. To do this within an analytical framework, two dominant theories will be employed to assist analysis:

- “the ignorant voter hypothesis”, borrowed from the public choice school of economics, which assumes people are primarily motivated by self-interest; and
- “value change theory”, advanced by Ronald Inglehart which, in some regards, predicts the opposite – vote choice will become increasingly dominated by “new politics” issues with an emphasis on environmentalism, egalitarianism, individual freedom and greater community input into government decision making.

These have been selected for two primary reasons. First, they are the dominant accounts developed by political scientists since the Second World War to explain how voter choice is exercised in contemporary western democracies and therefore deserve a place in any analysis of voter behaviour. Second, although they are not exactly conflicting accounts nor mutually exclusive, they do provide contrasting explanations for how voters might be exercising their vote choice.

An ongoing debate in the literature, of which discussion surrounding these two theories makes a considerable contribution, is the extent to which pragmatism and self-centeredness competes with ideology and altruism as a determinant of behavior in modern western society. If the ignorant voter theorists are correct then the vote choices Australians make should remain relatively static over time as the theory minimises ideology as an influencing factor. On the other hand, the value change theory predicts an ideological revolution, or at least evolution, in society so changes in voter behaviour should be apparent.

This paper will examine both theories for their applicability to the Australian context and use them as analytical frameworks in order to paint a picture of the median Australian voter. In this paper the term ‘median voter’ is used broadly and non-scientificly to describe the mythical ‘typical’ voter who might represent the broad middle ground of popular vote patterns.

### Public choice theory and voter ignorance

The contention that voters in western democracies are largely ignorant of politics and political issues is well founded in the literature. Public choice theory is used most often to explain voter ignorance pointing to evidence such as low voter turnout and low voter knowledge of politics and political issues to support the proposition (Caplan 2001; Carpini and Keeter 1996; Congleton 2001; 1957; Somin 2004).

Public choice theory has its roots as a branch of economics that gained modern prominence when one of the theory's pioneers, James Buchanan, was awarded the 1986 Nobel Prize. However, it had its genesis much earlier when the Scottish philosopher and economist, Adam Smith, declared the first law of the market to be self-interest, or the profit motive. Smith seminal work the *Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776 is his classic treatise on economic liberalism.

The underlying tenet of public choice theory is the assumption that people are primarily motivated by self-interest. Whether expressing choice through the marketplace or the ballot box - although people may have some concern for others - the main motive, be they voters, politicians, lobbyists or bureaucrats, is concern for themselves (Shaw 2005).

Specifically with regard to voter behaviour, public choice theory assumes that the individual lacks an incentive to monitor or analyse candidate policies; they are largely ignorant of political issues and this ignorance is rational (Caplan 2001). Rational because one vote cannot possibly influence an election; the direct impact of casting a well informed vote is almost nil. Therefore spending time taking an interest in the policies of candidates and parties, or even bothering to vote at all, is not worthwhile to the individual (Downes 1957).

There is a large body of research and literature to show in western democracies a relationship between voter ignorance of politics and low voter turnout, particularly in the United States (Campbell et al. 1960; Carpini and Keeter 1996; Somin 2004). A comparative study by the University of California's Martin Wattenberg (1998) shows that in a range of countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, Finland, Austria and Japan, turnout at the most recent election was the lowest recorded in the post-war period. Table 1 illustrates this decline and according to Wattenberg, "it is rare in comparative politics to find a trend that is so widely generalizable."

Table 2 summarises some recent findings in the United States in regard to voter knowledge. It shows that American voters tend to be ignorant on even the most basic of issues. Research in Canada (Voter Participation in Canada, CRIC 2001) and the UK (Miller 2004) come to similar conclusions.

**Table 1. Change in Voter Turnout in OECD Countries Since the 1950s**

Country	Average first 2 Elections 1950s %	Average 2 Most Recent Elections to 1998 %	Percentage Change
Switzerland	60.8	36.9	-39
France	69.7	56.4	-19
New Zealand	92.6	75.0	-19
Luxembourg	70.1	58.6	-16
United States	61.7	52.2	-15
Japan	73.0	62.7	-14
Austria	87.8	75.9	-14
United Kingdom	81.5	72.3	-11
Germany	81.1	72.0	-11
Netherlands	85.2	76.4	-10
Canada	65.9	60.5	-9
Ireland	73.8	67.8	-9
Italy	89.5	82.0	-8
Finland	76.8	71.1	-7
Belgium	82.7	78.1	-6
Iceland	90.3	86.7	-4
Norway	77.9	75.5	-3
<b>Australia</b>	<b>81.1</b>	<b>80.4</b>	<b>-1</b>
Denmark	77.5	80.4	+4
Sweden	76.9	81.1	+5
Note: Turnout rates calculated based on the percentage of the voting age population casting valid votes for a party or a candidate. With the exception of the United States, where presidential elections are used, all elections are for the lower house of the legislature. (Source: Wattenberg 1998)			

**Table 2. Selected Findings of Voter Knowledge in the USA**

Date	Finding	Source
1994	"One month after conservatives, led by Newt Gingrich, finally took control of the House of Representatives, 57% of the electorate did not know who Gingrich was."	(Shea 1999)
January 1995	39% of the public were unaware of the "Contract with America".	Washington Post Poll referenced in Bovard (2003)
September 1999	56% of Americans could not name one Democratic candidate for president in the 2000 election.	Pew Research Center
1999	"On a typical election day, only 44% of Americans can name a candidate in their own district, for any office."	(Shea 1999)
2000	53% of electors were not aware that George W. Bush is a conservative. (30 % chose moderate.)	National Election Survey
2004	"According to polls taken this year, nearly 65% of the public don't know that Congress has banned partial birth abortion."	Research by Somin in Jacoby (2004)

Ilya Somin (2004) from the George Mason School of Law argues that the better informed the voter the greater benefit to democracy and therefore society. Voters, he maintains, should be in a position to choose between opposing candidates on the basis of "the preferences that people have if their information were perfect". This is impossible, he concedes, however minimally informed voters should at least be aware of the basic tradeoffs between alternative policies. He concludes (2004 p. 3) that:

Few people dispute the well-established conclusion that most individual voters are abysmally ignorant of even very basic political information ... the sheer depth of most individual voters' ignorance is shocking to observers not familiar with research.

The question for this paper is to what extent the ignorant voter hypothesis has currency in Australia. Australia is one of the few democracies, particularly within OECD countries, where voting is compulsory and it is this aspect that principally sets the Australian political system apart from most other western democracies. There are other features of Australian politics absent, or found to varying degrees, in other democracies, for example preferential voting and proportional representation - no two political systems are exactly alike - but it is considered that the key issue of compulsory voting is sufficiently distinguishing to permit it, in essence, to be the dependent variable within a general discussion and comparison of western democracies.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As an aid to the international reader, a summary of the principal aspects of the Australian voting and political system can be found as an appendix to this paper.

As Somin (2004 p. 15) points out, the most fundamental cause of ignorance according to public choice theorists resides in the problem created by the insignificance of any individual vote in determining an electoral outcome. A logical application of public choice theory must determine that this will hold true regardless of any compulsion to vote. Public choice would ascribe no greater incentive for Australians to become better informed voters than, say, their United States counterparts: their vote still can not make a difference. Even an individual forced by legislative sanctions to the ballot box has no incentive to invest heavily in acquiring sufficient knowledge to make an informed choice. To do so, according to public choice, would not be rational. As such it can be hypothesised that:

**H1:** The Australian voter is largely ignorant of political issues.

Three aspects of voter engagement - voter turnout, the rate of informal voting, and the extent of voter knowledge - will be examined to test the hypothesis.

**Voter turnout.** Table 3 considers the most recent federal election held in 2004. It shows the participation rate (ie. voter turnout) holding steady at just on 80 per cent when compared to the 50 year average shown in Table 1. Some explanation of the turnout rate as used in this paper is required.

Table 3 indicates that, although enrolment in Australia is compulsory for (nearly all) citizens over the age of eighteen, only 85 per cent register. A small portion of the 15 per cent non-registrations can be accounted for by illegal immigrants, resident expatriates from other countries and prisoners (all whom legislation specifically bar from voting) but the majority are people who either choose not to enrol, or are too apathetic and disengaged from politics to bother. In a study undertaken by the Australian Electoral Commission it was found that only one third of eighteen year olds had enrolled when asked (Print, Saha, and Edwards 2004). Enforcement of the requirement to enrol is extremely difficult and the Australian government has to leave it largely up to the citizens to register upon passing their eighteenth birthday but before the next election, and then to keep their enrolment current as they change addresses over their lifetime.

A recent high-profile example illustrates the problem. Prior to the 2004 federal election the Australian Labor Party, the main party of the centre-left, endorsed a popular rock singer and environmentalist, Peter Garrett, as a candidate for the election. A "media storm" erupted when it was found Mr Garrett had not been on the electoral role since 1996 (Secombe 2004).

Table 3 shows that a further five percent, although enrolled, did not attend the ballot to cast a vote. Voter turnout, therefore, is the number of votes lodged expressed as a percentage of total eligible population. This is the formula used for tables 1 and 2 of this paper. In Australia it was 80 per cent at the 2004 election. All those on the role who do not vote on ballot day are sent a "please explain" letter by the Electoral Commission. The legislation allows for some "valid and sufficient reasons", such as illness, but if these



are not furnished or the letter is ignored, a fine of \$20 is imposed, and if not paid court action can be instigated.

**Table 3. Voter Participation 2004 Australian Federal Election Lower House**

Category	Voters/votes (million)	% Eligible Voters
Eligible Voters (Population aged 18+)*	15.509	
Enrolled Voters (Those 18+ on electoral roll)	13.098	85
<b>Voter Turnout (Those voted as a % of eligible voters)</b>	<b>12.355</b>	<b>80</b>
Formal Votes (Those votes correctly filled out)	11.715	76
(Source: Australian Electoral Commission and Australian Bureau of Statistics)		
*Note: Strictly, not all Australians aged over 18 are legally able to vote. These include illegal immigrants, resident other-nationals, prisoners and tribalised aborigines. These groups represent relatively small numbers and are not material to this overall analysis.		

McAllister et al (1992, pp. 1-10) offer three theories to explain non-voting in Australia: institutions factors, for example registration laws and enrolment procedures; social factors, such as age, gender and socio-economic status; and protest factors, which implies a refusal to accept the political system or a distaste for the candidate choice presented. Certainly, all three of these would have their place in explaining why 20 per cent of Australia's eligible population one way or another - either by failing to enrol, or if enrolled failing to turn up to cast a ballot on polling day - and indicates that rational ignorance is a contributing factor.

Of the countries listed in Table 1 only Belgium and Australia have compulsory voting for national elections. Both these countries have maintained a similar turnout rate of about 80 per cent since the 1950s resisting Wattenberg's observation, noted previously, of the decline in voter participation in most countries over that time.

Much of the literature and research into voter participation and apathy comes from the United States where turnout has declined to near 50 per cent, and the UK where turnout at the 2001 and 2005 elections dropped to about 60 per cent – at which levels the ignorant voter, or at least the apathetic voter, hypothesis has definite validity – and it could be that this literature is colouring the debate elsewhere. The evidence is that for most western European democracies around three quarters of eligible citizens vote which indicates a higher engagement level. As Rose (2004, pp. 17-24) points out, there are many reasons why voter turnout will vary, apathy and ignorance being only two. Whether compulsory voting would make a difference universally depends on factors such as how actively the laws are enforced and the penalties imposed.

... turnout in West European countries is not as high as democratic activists would like, and there are some signs that electors are less likely to vote today than they were a generation ago ... it is always possible to find examples of turnout going down or going up, and generalizations based on one country can be contradicted by generalizations drawn from another (Rose 2004, p. 17).

The conclusion in regard to turnout is that Australia at 80 per cent, compared to western democracies, has higher participation, and that this difference is largely explained by the compulsory voting requirement. What lends support for hypothesis H1 is the fact that, despite the legal compulsion, a sizable minority (20 per cent) choose either not to enrol, or if enrolled, not to vote. It is hard to know how many of these are politically ignorant - in the sense used by public choice theorists in that they make a rational decision not to inform themselves - although the Australian Electoral Commission found that one in two eighteen year olds feel they lack the knowledge to understand the issues, the political parties, to make a decision to vote, and in general to vote (Print, Saha, and Edwards 2004). Sections to follow in this paper examine more closely the depth of political knowledge amongst Australian citizens.

**Informal voting.** In addition to considering the number of people who cast a ballot, it is also instructive to look at the level of informal votes within that turnout. Informal votes are those made on ballot day, but for some reason they are not counted. The ballot papers could be spoilt, not marked correctly, or in Australia, not marked at all. The Australian voter only need turn up at the voting station, have their name recorded and receive a ballot paper. There is no need to even write anything on the paper; it could be deposited straight into the ballot box and the voter would still be recorded as making a vote. Public choice theory would have the rationally ignorant voter taking the minimum effort on ballot day and thereby lodging a relatively large number of informal votes.

McAllister et al (1992, abstract) in their study of informal voting at the 1987 and 1990 Australian elections found that Australia has one of the highest levels of informal votes amongst the established democracies. But, as determined previously, the distinguishing characteristic of the Australian system over these countries is compulsory voting. Table 4 shows Australia's informal voting rate (to 1990 when the study was done) compared with selected countries. It can be seen that high informal rates occur in less developed countries, both compulsory and non-compulsory jurisdictions, where it might be concluded that a whole range of social, economic and political factors, not as prominent in western democracies, would come into play.

Australia, at 3.7 per cent is nowhere near the levels of these countries and closer to the low rates of non-compulsory western democracies like the United Kingdom. It is relevant to note that the informal vote in Australia has risen in recent elections to 4.8 per cent in 2001 and 5.2 per cent in 2004 (Australian Election Commission). It is the contention in this paper that these levels are still low in comparison to what public choice theory might predict informal voting to be.

**Table 4. Informal Voting Patterns Selected Countries**

Country	Informal %	Min Voting Age	Compulsory Voting?	Rank
Brazil	23.7	18	Y	1
Peru	22.6	18	Y	2
Ecuador	19.3	18	Y	3
Burma	12.3	18	N	4
Somalia	11.1	18	N	5
Mozambique	10.7	18	N	6
Angola	10.4	18	N	7
Bolivia	10.0	18	Y	8
Morocco	10.0	18	N	9
El Salvador	9.5	18	N	10
<b>Australia</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>46</b>
United Kingdom	0.2	18	N	146

Note: 146 countries were analysed and the average informal vote over the last 4 elections to 1990 were calculated. The countries were ranked from the highest informal percentage (1) to the lowest (146). Australia ranks 46. (Source: Medew 2005, from McAllister et al 1992)

The ignorant voter hypothesis presents an image of a disgruntled voter, begrudgingly turning up on ballot day because that is the law, then not caring whether their vote is valid or not. While McAllister et al (1992, p. 28) conclude that informal voting in Australia is not motivated by widespread protest of the system, it would be expected that compulsory voting would lead to some higher level of informal votes because the only legal method of political protest is to spoil the ballot paper or leave it blank deliberately (Lavareda 1991), whereas in non-compulsory jurisdictions voters so motivated would boycott the ballot. This is one explanation for the difference between the United Kingdom, for example, and Australia.

But at 5.2 per cent Australia's informal rate must still be considered low in so far as it indicates voter ignorance. Jackman (2005) in his study of informal votes at the 2004 Australian election found the rate as low as 2.8 per cent in affluent electorates, up to a maximum of 11.8 per cent in working class electorates and those with a high prevalence of non-English speaking households. This does indicate a degree of ignorance where education or language is lacking, but it is not possible to describe it as wide-spread or entrenched.

Australian voters, ignorant of issues or not, at least take enough procedural knowledge to cast a valid vote (leaving aside the unknown proportion whose vote is valid, albeit they mark the paper randomly or straight down the ticket, the so-called donkey vote). Australians have to learn and apply the relatively complicated preferential voting system,

where every square must be numbered in order for the vote to be formal, rather than the one mark required for first-past-the-post voting used in non-compulsory jurisdictions.

In conclusion, it is instructive to consider the informal vote rate with that of voter turnout discussed in the previous sub-section where it was shown that 20 per cent of those eligible did not vote on ballot day, and it was contended that this was an indication of at least that portion of the voting population giving weight to the ignorant voter hypothesis. When this figure is added to the informal vote rate, which is done in the final line of Table 3, it shows that of the possible votes available to the democratic process (the total population over eighteen) one quarter are lost on ballot day. One quarter of voters is a sizable minority and lends credence to supporting hypothesis H1.

**Voter knowledge.** The evidence above is that together voter turnout and informal voting give some weight to the ignorant voter hypothesis. But the way the data are considered also depends on the emphasis given. It could equally be said that Australians, by a large majority of 75 per cent, turn up on ballot day and cast a valid vote. That statement would not support the ignorant voter thesis presented in hypothesis H1.

An examination of the depth of political knowledge in Australia is required to “flesh out” the participation data. Does compelling someone to vote mean they have more incentive to take an interest in political issues? Do they have an increased motivation to gain the background knowledge and analytical skills required to understand in detail what candidates stand for?

According to participatory theories of democracy, involvement in voting gives the individual an affinity with the political process and reflects a commitment to its norms and values (Lively 1975, pp. 174-176). But, as previously outlined, public choice theory states that because gaining knowledge offers few benefits but requires a substantial investment in time and effort, the average voter should remain rationally ignorant (Somin 2004).

The scholarly literature on voter ignorance is not as comprehensive in the Australian context as for other jurisdictions. Also in Australia the main polling organisations do not undertake anywhere near the quantity of polls (of the type illustrated in Table 2) that the Americans run regularly on voter issue awareness. In Australia it is necessary to dig deeper to uncover the indicators.

Somin (2004, p. 3) proposes four criteria to define the minimum knowledge prerequisites for individual voters to be able to exert meaningful influence over a given issue:

1. Voters must be aware of the issue's existence.
2. They must have a position on the issue.
3. They must know the positions on the issue of the opposing candidates.
4. They must be aware of the basic tradeoffs between alternative policies.

Table 5 and Chart 1 summarise the results of a survey of Australian voters' behaviour at the 2001 general election (Bean et al 2002). The results are to be interpreted with some

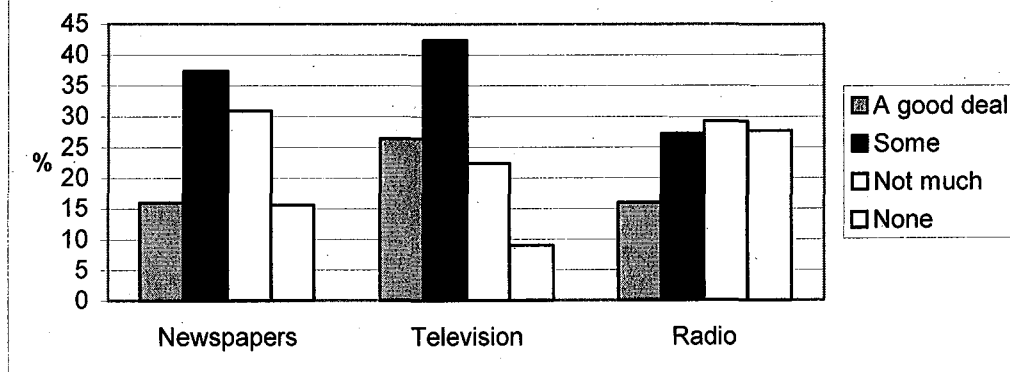
caution as this is a self-completion survey and it would be expected that respondents with a greater connection to society and politics would be more likely to participate. With this caution in mind, Table 5 shows a reasonably high level of interest in both politics and the election campaign (both over 70 per cent) which would indicate the four factors above were, at least to some extent, in most voters' contemplation during the election campaign. Also, the fact that 65 per cent of respondents care which party wins, and that 87 per cent had come to a decision on their vote before election day, indicates that some synthesis, analysis and comparison of candidates and policy issues must have been undertaken by voters. Chart 1 supports this notion, indicating that a large majority of voters followed the election campaign through the media at the level of at least "some" or "a good deal".

**Table 5. Voter Survey 2001 Australian Federal Election**

Survey Question	Response
Care which party wins election	65.0 % Cared a good deal 35.0 % Did not care very much or at all
When decided which way to vote	87.7 % Before election day 12.3 % On election day
Interest in politics	76.1 % "A good deal" or "some" 23.9 % "Not much" or "none"
Interest in election campaign	70.4 % "A good deal" or "some" 29.6 % "Not much" or "none"
Note: Self-completion mail out-mail back survey. 2010 responses. (Source: Bean, Gow, and McAllister 2002)	

**Chart 1: 2001 Australian Election - Medium relied on the most by voters for election campaign news**

(Source: Bean et al 2002)



The above analysis indicates a generally high level of engagement in political issues by the majority of voters, but what of the depth of knowledge? Australians might be engaged in the system enough to vote, but what do they know of politics? Just because

someone has an interest in a subject, reads the papers and follows the television news enough to cast a valid vote does not mean that person has knowledge enough to make an informed opinion. As Congleton (2001, p. 39) points out ignorance and knowledge can be binary; one may know a fact or not, or it can be a continuum. Australians are on that continuum somewhere, but where?

Ian McAllister undertook a study in 2001 leading him to suppose that, "by any standards, levels of political knowledge in the electorate are low." (McAllister 2001). Based on analysis of a survey of voters in the 1997 Australian federal election he found that the median voter could only answer correctly two out of seven factual statements about political institutions. McAllister concluded that the results suggest a high level of political ignorance in line with findings in the United States (McAllister 2001).

But not all of McAllister's observations appear to support this contention. He also asked respondents if they knew the name of their federal member prior to the election. Seventy per cent correctly gave the name of the member and 61 per cent the correct name of the party. This is an interesting finding, because it appears not to be consistent with the experiences in the United States. Table 2 shows that only 44 per cent of Americans could name an election candidate. This is not exactly the same question, but close enough to indicate that Australians are more knowledgeable about who their candidates and parliamentarians are.

In an attempt to measure political competence, the extent to which a citizen utilises abstract political concepts to evaluate arguments and make informed political decisions, McAllister looked at the response to two questions:

1. With regard to whether respondents considered political parties important in making systems work, on a scale of one to five, where five denotes the highest level of competence, the median voter scored four, suggesting a high level of political competence.
2. With regard to whether or not respondents thought it mattered who they voted for, forty per cent believed that it did.

When these findings are considered alongside those outlined in Table 5 the picture emerges of the Australian voter who is not as politically ignorant as his or her counterparts in most western democracies, particularly in countries like the United States where the turnout rates are low. The evidence indicates that the median Australian voter meets, to at least some degree, Somin's first three criteria: he or she (1) is aware of important political issues, (2) holds opinions on those issues, and (3) knows the positions on the issue of the opposing candidates.

However, in so far as meeting the fourth of Somin's indicators, that voters must be aware of the basic tradeoffs between alternative policies, it is likely that the ignorant voter hypothesis is supported. The findings put forward by Bean et al (2002) and McAllister (2001) show that Australian voters struggle to understand policies in depth. But

attempting to put a “level” on the extent of ignorance or knowledge is a hard task. All scholars have difficulty determining what the voter should know, the point at which knowledge can be considered sufficient, and how it should be measured.

Rabinowitz and MacDonald (1989, p. 94) are among the writers who question whether voters weigh up issue alternatives in an empirical way, in the sense that they choose between policy tradeoffs as Somin believes they should. Rabinowitz and MacDonald accept that the ignorant voter exists, to the extent that voters operate with low levels of information, but reject the notion that the voter acts within a rational choice framework. Vote choices are made in a diffused fashion rather than in terms of a set of specific policy alternatives. If this is the case Somin’s fourth criterion can never be met.

**Conclusions.** Putting all the evidence presented in this section together, is the ignorant voter hypothesis supported in Australia? To a point greater than the hypothesis would prescribe (but not necessarily to the degree some political scholars and commentators might like), Australian elections are characterised by higher turnout rates, lower levels of informal voting, higher levels of citizen engagement in politics, higher public awareness of policy options, and generally a belief by voters that their vote is important.

But all this is relative. It is difficult to escape the conclusion from the data that Australia’s system of compulsory voting produces elections that are decided by at least a sizable portion of the electorate that does not know about political issues and does not care. Whether any voter in a modern democracy can ever have enough information to know all they need to know on all issues is highly unlikely. No one acting rationally could invest the time and effort needed to fully analyse all policy issues so, to an extent, all voters are politically ignorant. What can be concluded is that the median Australian voter is somewhat less ignorant - or somewhat more knowledgeable, take your pick - than the median voter in many western democracies, but not enough to disprove hypothesis H1.

### **Value change thesis and the postmaterialist voter**

The previous section of this paper considered voter participation concluding that the Australian voter is relatively well engaged in the political process, albeit not having the incentive to invest heavily in detailed knowledge of policy options and thereby remaining largely ignorant of politics and political issues. This section now examines the values that influence voting choice.

Part of the “malaise” in politics and lack of interest by voters in western democracies (as indicated by the general reduction in voter turnouts in Table 1) has been attributed to an interpretation that mainstream political parties have abandoned ideology and headed to where they see the most votes: the centre right. British prime minister, Tony Blair, it has been argued (Richardson 2005), has moved his party to the right in many of the same ways Australian prime minister John Howard has, even though, notionally, they head parties from opposite sides of the conventional left-right schism.

For this paper, the apparent jettisoning of ideology by the parties and, as they scramble for the middle ground, the lack of difference, from the voters' perspective, between the parties, begs the question: has the steam gone out of the postmaterialist revolution? Has the influential account of social and political change in western nations, the value change theory popularised by Ronald Inglehart (1977) then expanded and developed with the collaboration of others (Abramson and Inglehart 1995; Inglehart 2003; Inglehart and Abramson 1994; Inglehart and Abramson 1999; Inglehart and Barker 2000), bypassed most voters?. Answering that question from an Australian context is the task of this paper.

For Inglehart, postmaterialist values should be gradually replacing materialistic ones as survival in modern society becomes increasingly secure. He sees that as values become progressively more postmaterialist, politics will become increasingly dominated by "new politics" issues emphasizing environmentalism, egalitarianism, individual freedom and greater community input into government decision making (Western and Tranter 2001, p. 440). Scarsborough (1995, p. 156) concludes that, "indisputably, across much of Western Europe, value orientations are shifting" while Kasse and Newton (1995, p. 63) sum up their research as follows:

We find substantial support for the model which traces social changes to value changes, and value changes into changes in political attitudes and behaviours, especially through the process of intergenerational replacement ... The decline of religious values and the rise of postmaterialist values have transformed the cultural composition of Western democracies in recent decades.

Given, therefore, the influential nature of value change thesis in the literature, for the purposes of this paper it is reasonable to hypothesise that:

**H2:** Voting choice in Australia is increasingly influenced by postmaterialist values.

Recent research in Australia has debated the extent to which postmaterialism as opposed to economic self-interest influences the electors. Some argue (McAllister 2001; McAllister and Vowles 1994; Papadakis 1990) that postmaterialist values have partly displaced materialist concerns, while others (Blount 1998) have found no relationship between postmaterialist values and voting behaviour, with economic considerations remaining strongly in the voters' minds.

It is not proposed in this paper to summarise that debate in detail because, as Western and Tranter point out (2001, pp. 439) part of the disagreement between researchers reflects methodological differences in the research which leads to empirical support for both economic and postmaterialist vote choices in Australia. Rather, this paper will examine two factors which it is contended will give some indication as to whether the hypothesis is supported:

1. Voting patterns over the past four elections. Support for the hypothesis would predict increased voting for parties and candidates with a postmaterialist platform.



2. Recent public opinion polls of election issues. Support for the hypothesis would predict support for postmaterialist issues over materialist issues.

**Voting patterns.** Research by Western and Tranter (2001) and Blount (1998) indicate that Coalition voters tend to be materialists, Labor voters tend to be drawn from the middle of the materialist-postmaterialist spectrum, while Democrats and Greens are distinctly postmaterialist. An application of the value change thesis, therefore, should see a decrease in the vote for the Conservative Coalition, Labor staying steady and an increase in the vote for the Democrats and Greens.

Tables 6 and 7 track the primary vote in both houses of Australia's parliament over the last four elections. The results do not support the value change thesis. In the House of Representatives the Coalition's vote dipped from 46.9 per in 1996 to 39.5 per cent in 1998, but not greatly to the benefit of Labor or the Greens/Democrats. The tables show that these Coalition votes went mainly to a new party, One Nation, which collected 8.4 per cent. One Nation was a party with a conservative, xenophobic, protectionist platform which appealed to voters who felt fearful of the direction modern society was taking; definitely a party for the materialist. As One Nation support fell over subsequent elections (for reasons not really relevant to this paper), voters returned to the Conservative Coalition. By 2004, Coalition support was where it had been in 1996. In the Senate over the four elections, Coalition support rose from 40.7 per cent to 45.0 per cent.

**Table 6. Primary Votes House of Representatives**

Party	Year			
	1996 %	1998 %	2001 %	2004 %
Conservative Coalition	46.9	39.5	42.7	46.7
Labor Party	38.8	40.1	37.8	37.6
Green/Democrats	8.4	7.7	10.4	8.4
One Nation	-	8.4	4.3	1.4
Others	5.9	4.3	4.8	5.9
(Source: Australian Electoral Office)				

**Table 7. Primary Votes Senate**

Party	Year			
	1996 %	1998 %	2001 %	2004 %
Conservative Coalition	40.7	37.7	41.8	45.0
Labor Party	36.2	37.3	34.2	35.0
Green/Democrats	12.5	11.1	12.4	9.8
One Nation	-	9.0	5.5	1.7
Others	10.6	4.9	6.1	8.5
(Source: Australian Electoral Office)				

The Labor Party has more or less marked time over the four elections in both houses. Traditionally a party for the socialist and the radical, it has become more mainstream as it has tried to be true to its blue collar roots, who tend to be materialist in outlook, while also appealing to the educated left-wing voter, who tends to favour “new politics” issues.

The Greens and the Democrats, although demonstrating some marked differences in their policy platforms, are counted together here because both parties are favoured by postmaterialist voters and that is what is being measured. It can be seen that the Green/Democrat vote has stayed steady over the period in the lower house, while their Senate vote declined from a combined 12.5 per cent in 1996 to 9.8 per cent in 2004.

The above data directly challenge the Inglehart’s value change view of vote choice. In fact, over the period 1996 to 2004 the Australian elections show the opposite trend to the one Inglehart predicts: during that period votes for parties that support materialist policies increased, while votes for parties that support postmaterialist policies decreased.

Therefore it is concluded that recent voting patterns in Australia do not support the hypothesis that voting choice in Australia is increasingly influenced by postmaterialist values

**Opinion polls.** The recent opinion polls provide a contradictory insight into how Australian voters think and act. Table 8 reproduces a survey conducted for the World Economic Forum at the end of 2004 by Gallup International (Roymorgan.com.au 2005). It shows that Australians are more worried about issues such as terrorism, world peace and the environment - postmodernist issues - than their world counterparts, who comparatively are more concerned with the materialist issues of the economy and employment. This would indicate support for the value change hypothesis in Australia.

However, Table 9, which summarises the results of a voter survey taken in May 2004, six months before the federal election, shows that materialist issues of taxation, pensions and health services headed a list of actions people expected from the government. This would not support the value change hypothesis.

**Table 8. Australian's Biggest Worry for 2005**

Issue	Australia %	World %
An increase in terrorism	31	22
Expansion of the Iraq war to other parts of the world	26	16
A serious disease threat or epidemic	12	10
A major environmental disaster	12	7
A failure of the economy	8	21
Loss of jobs in my country	4	19
Something else/can't say	6	5
Respondents were asked: "From these issues, which one would be your greatest worry for 2005?" (Source: Roymorgan.com.au 2005)		

**Table 9. Issues of Most Benefit to the Australian Voter – May 2004**

Issue	%
Taxation, lower taxes, tax reform	32
Health, Medicare, health insurance	16
Pensions and the aged	13
Education	12
Environment	3
Other issues (no single issue scored above 3 per cent)	13
Nothing/can't say	11
Respondents were asked: "Thinking about yourself, what could the Federal Government do that would most benefit you and your family?" (Roymorgan.com.au 2004)	

These two polls appear to present a paradox: on one hand the public expresses concern for postmaterialist values of world peace and the environment, and on the other want the government to act on materialist values such as taxation and the economy. The answer could be that Australians are concerned about postmaterialist issues on a world stage but at home believe their government can only really do something about the practical things in life.

Australia is a prosperous, relatively safe, under-populated country with abundant natural assets and a relaxed lifestyle. It is country far away from many of the troubles that make world headlines. Australians see via the media the effects of terrorism, war and environmental disasters in other parts of the world and have become fearful that one day these horrors might come to their country. People in other countries, however, have become accustomed to and have more proximity to such dangers - perhaps familiarity leads to a blasé attitude, to a degree - allowing them to worry less about postmaterialist values on a world scale and more about the economy and jobs.

Australians know that their government can do very little to reduce world terrorism or avert an environmental disaster. They worry about it, but are too pragmatic to convert that worry into a vote, thus they vote for policies that effect them directly, like crime, defence and the economy. There is growing support, in direct conflict to Inglehart's theory, for the notion of a pragmatic, risk-averse voter acting primarily out of self-interest; the so-called suburban "aspirational voter" with a social culture that is "ambitious and mobile" (Loosley 2001, speaking of Sydney).

There is evidence that young Australians, traditionally more inclined to left-wing radicalism and counter-culture, are embracing the pragmatic ideal, directly conflicting with Inglehart's contention of generational change fueling postmaterialist values. A poll in 1997 found that support for the Conservative Coalition among 18 to 24 year olds rose from 31 per cent at the time of the October 1996 election to 43 per cent in June 1997 (Murphy 1999). Since that election, as Tables 6 and 7 show, the Conservative Coalition has consolidated its vote in the electorate, indicating that these voters, and successive new young voters, have continued to support the conservatives. As Denis Shanahan (1998, p. 21) wrote, also in response to polls showing a surge in youth support for the conservatives:

Call it patriotism, a community ethos or just plain pragmatism, but Australia's first-time voters, after a generation of Labor governments, are becoming more conservative ... Indeed, the 2 million young voters today are more inclined to agree with their grandparents than their parents: generational support has leapt over the heads of the baby-boomers.

On the evidence of the opinion polls and elections (the ultimate opinion poll) held in Australia over the past decade there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that voting choice in Australia is increasingly influenced by postmaterialist values.

**Conclusions.** The 2004 federal election in Australia was won in convincingly by the Conservative Coalition on a platform of the materialist values of debt reduction, interest rates and jobs (Bantick 2004, p. 18). They have won the four elections since 1996 on similar platforms. Although this paper does not intend to evaluate Australian state election results, it is worth noting that state governments have "ditched traditional concerns about civil liberties and adopted a hard line on law and order ... and economic management" (Steketee 2004, p. 22). And these are state Labor governments, which indicate that the successful major parties in Australia, regardless of their traditional values background, have learned to embrace the pragmatic, self-interested, risk averse voter as they attempt to attract the most voters on election day.

Inglehart's "silent revolution" of societal value change from a preoccupation with physical subsistence and safety to giving highest priority to belonging, self-expression and quality of life very much parallels Maslow's idea of a hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1970). Maslow, who developed his famous theory in the 1950s, has been a great influence on post-war studies of social science. Inglehart, as did Maslow, saw that once base needs were met then it seemed certain that people would move on to "higher" needs.

But the evidence in Australia is that citizens seem increasingly indifferent to moral and ethical issues when it comes to their vote (Adams 2003, p. 11). This is not to say that people do not care or worry about quality of life issues, as Table 8 indicates, but this concern has not transferred into vote choice in Australia. When it comes to a vote, it is self-interest that has currency; the value change thesis H2 is not supported.

### **Summary - The median Australian voter**

The underlying evaluation tool used in this paper to divine the vote choices Australians make has been the extent to which self-interest plays a role. Firstly, public choice theory was used to develop a hypothesis that the Australian voter is largely ignorant of politics because it is in their self-interest not to invest time and effort in acquiring enough knowledge to cast an informed vote, and further, that this ignorance is rational. The evidence presented here generally supports the hypothesis.

Of the 75 per cent of Australians who do cast a valid vote, the picture is one of a relatively (compared to most western democracies) aware electorate, not perhaps “tuned in” to the details of politics, but at least engaged in and knowledgeable of the process enough to value their right to vote and to take that right seriously. However, in regard to depth of knowledge sufficient to make an informed policy choice, the evidence supports the ignorant voter hypothesis. The rational Australian voter acting in self-interest remains largely politically ignorant on policy detail and the policy trade-offs.

Also adding weight to support the hypothesis is the fact that, at the 2004 federal election, 25 per cent of eligible Australians did not cast a valid vote, in three ways: 15 per cent did not enrol (even though it is compulsory); 5 per cent, even though enrolled did not turn up to vote on ballot day; while a further 5 per cent voted, but somehow spoilt the ticket, either deliberately or in error, to render it not counted.

Secondly, the paper examined the hypothesis that voting choice in Australia is increasingly influenced by postmaterialist values, using as a framework the value change theory popularised by Ronald Inglehart. Two factors were examined to test the hypothesis: voting patterns over the past four elections, and recent voter public opinion polls.

Both tests resulted in the hypothesis not being supported. The election analysis revealed increased support for parties that hold materialist values, the direct opposite of what the value change theory would predict, while public opinion polls clearly showed that, when it came to determining their vote, electors ranked materialist concerns above postmaterialist. The image is of a pragmatic, self-interested, risk averse voter concerned about taxation, the economy, pensions, education and health services.

It is important to point out that this paper has made an attempt to describe the median voter in Australia, not every voter. The fact is that electors generally do not make their vote decisions based solely on distinct ideological cleavages, be they the traditional left or right, or the ones discussed here: materialist or postmaterialist, self-interested or

altruistic. As Western and Tranter (2001, p. 456) identify, Australian politics cannot easily be arrayed on a single dimension continuum. For example, self-interest is not always analogous with materialism; it is quite logical for someone to favour postmaterialist policies such as freedom of speech or the environment as much out of self-interest as out of altruism.

Australian voters make their vote decisions in a multidimensional political space, not a unidimensional one, and any analysis of voter behaviour must recognise that. Notwithstanding, it is the conclusion of this paper that the median Australian voter, acting with a degree of rational ignorance, hold economic values highly in making their vote choices. This implies that economic evaluation will continue to be more consequential for electoral outcomes than postmaterialist values.

In the end, a voter has just one vote. Australians, by and large, takes that vote seriously albeit they do not have the incentive to invest heavily in acquainting themselves in detail about all their policy options. So when they make their vote, they will be acting with a relatively high degree of political ignorance. There will be a number of competing values vying for that vote, but ultimately the vote choice appears to depend much more strongly on their concrete assessments of the state of their own finances and the national economy than on their more abstract value priorities for the environment and social justice.

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